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ARGOSY

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Spring Song

IT was a magnificent morning in early spring when I watched among the trees to see the procession come down the hillside. The upper air was woven with the music of the larks, and my whole world thrilled with the conception of summer. The young pale wind-flowers had arisen by the wood-gate, and under the hazels, when perchance the hot sun pushed his way, new little suns dawned, and blazed with real light. There was a certain thrill and quickening everywhere, as a woman must feel when she has conceived.

A sallow tree in a favoured spot looked like a pale gold cloud of summer dawn. Birds called and flashed on every hand; they made off exultant with streaming strands of grass, or wisps of fleece, plunging into the dark spaces of the wood, and out again into the blue . . .

Ah, but the thrush is scornful, ringing out his voice from the hedge! He sets his breast against the mud, and models it warm for the turquoise eggs—blue, blue, bluest of eggs, which cluster so close and round against the breast, which round up beneath the breast, nestling content. You should see the bright ecstasy in the eyes of a nesting thrush, because of the rounded caress of the eggs against her breast!

D. H. LAWRENCE, *The White Peacock*

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ROMANY LAUGHTER

"I haven't a pound in the world," said Curly, grinning cheerfully

by JIM PHELAN

PLENTY of city folks will remember the Bank of Engford swindle—it was a famous case, and the newspapers were full of it. But Lorremy Loveridge, a Romany horse-dealer who couldn't read newspapers or anything else, had cause to remember it also.

The swindler passed thousands of worthless bits of paper, looking just like five-pound notes. They were accepted too, by merchants and shopkeepers and such-like people. So it was easy to pass them off on a gipsy horse-trader who couldn't read.

The papers were the size and shape of a five-pound note, and had the words "Five Pounds" in the proper place. Also in the proper place, and in that old-fashioned print they use on a bank-note, were the words "Bank of Engford." At first glance, and at second glance too, that last word looked just right.

When the trick was exposed, the victims could do nothing except burn the worthless papers and swear to be more careful in future. But Lorremy Loveridge, with a hundred and ten of the imitations on his hands, couldn't bring himself to part with them. He never tried to pass any of the notes. But he kept them hidden in his caravan, maybe as a reminder but maybe just because they looked like money.

Sixty-odd, with a wrinkled dark brown face that made his white hair look whiter, Lorremy was tough and powerful, and had a grim fierce humour of his own. But very few people enjoyed his jokes. Certainly young Curly Docwra didn't.

Sing or dance, fight or make love, snare a rabbit or trade a horse—Curly could do anything like that, and laugh while he did it. So he was liked by the Romany folk, and wouldn't have bothered about Lorremy's opinion, except for two things.

The first was that he tried to do a little horse-dealing himself, which meant that he came into competition with Lorremy at every horse-market. But the second thing was even more serious.

Curly was only twenty-five, so he hadn't a caravan of his own yet. But he was hoping. Presently, when he had a waggon to live in, he might marry the girl he wanted. He might.

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Curly's girl Marla was a real heart-lifting beauty, with laughing dark eyes and a flash of white teeth under a mass of black hair. Wildly in love with Curly Docwra, she too was hoping for the day when they might have a waggon, and could get married.

But neither Curly nor Marla had much hope really. Because Marla Loveridge was Lorremy's daughter. Lorremy was a rich man, and it was well known that Marla would bring several hundred pounds to the man who married her. It was also known that Lorremy would consider no penniless youngster as a husband for Marla—which put Curly Docwra out of the running.

Of course old Lorremy knew the young couple liked one another. But more than once he had sworn, with his hoarse jeering chuckle, that his daughter should never marry a donkey-dealer. Donkey-dealer is what one horse-trader calls another when he wants to make little of him.

About Curly not having a caravan there was bitterness too. Because Lorremy had an extra waggon which he had bought cheaply, and that waggon had belonged to Simon Docwra, Curly's father. When Simon died, Curly was away on the road and Lorremy had bought the caravan for next to nothing.

All that would have been bad enough. But Curly suspected there was worse. Because the Romany people have a habit of keeping their money in the caravans instead of in a bank.

They have to. For instance, if a gipsy is buying a horse from a farmer who has never seen him before, that farmer will want his money in cash, and not in a cheque which might be worthless. Curly suspected that there had been money in his father's caravan. But Lorremy always swore there wasn't even one pound note in the waggon when he bought it.

Curly didn't believe that. But there was no use crying over spilt milk. So young Docwra hoped and planned and laughed as usual. Until one day when Knapper Carey, another Romany youngster, talked about Simon Docwra's money.

Six hundred pounds Knapper Carey swore he had seen Curly's father count out, one night shortly before he died. When the waggon was sold to Lorremy Loveridge, that money might have been in it, hidden somewhere. Curly sat by his camp-fire, not laughing, for a long time after Carey had left.

There aren't many hiding-places in a Romany caravan. One waggon is much like another, and the places get known. So the first thing a man does, when he buys a caravan, is to sound out the likely hiding-places, the " plants " as they are called. But Curly knew his father's plant had been an unusual one.

In a Romany waggon the stove is a fixture—an important and dangerous fixture, because a shaky stove may burn a caravan to

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cinders in quick time. So the stove is never moved, as a rule. But under the iron plate at the stove-base had been Simon Docwra's plant.

There was a chance that Lorremy was telling the truth, and that he had never found the money. Moreover, the waggon could be bought from him, if Curly dared to take the risk. The trouble was that Curly had only just over a hundred pounds in the world.

That was little enough, for Curly to start as a horse-dealer, and he had expected to wait a year or two before he could afford a waggon. Now he had to decide whether he should risk his last hundred, his only hundred, on the hope that his father's money was still in the plant.

Marla was washing up after breakfast next morning, when Curly rode his horse into the Loveridge camp. Knowing that Lorremy would soon appear, to mock and growl and question, Curly talked fast.

"Listen, darlin'," he said in an undertone. "I want a few minutes alone in my father's waggon. Fix that for me, when I give you the word." Marla barely had time to nod, when Lorremy strode over to the fire.

"We have no donkeys for sale," he laughed. "And no mangy, starving ponies have strayed in. So there won't be any business here for *you*." He watched Curly's eyes, with a mischievous grin. Then, when he heard that Curly wanted to buy his father's waggon, Lorremy swore he didn't want to sell. But he led the way to the caravan, and they began to bargain.

A hundred and twenty pounds Lorremy demanded, and Curly promptly offered him thirty-five, both of them knowing that fifty pounds would be a fair price. At the end of ten minutes' bargaining Curly was puzzled.

Little by little he had raised his offer to sixty pounds, and then to seventy. But Lorremy's price came down more slowly, and below a hundred pounds he refused to move.

"I'll look over the waggon," Curly said at last, and Lorremy unlocked the door. As they went up the steps Curly made a sign to Marla, and then he followed Lorremy into the caravan.

Young Docwra set about testing the pillars and the roof, as a man will do when he buys a waggon, until a scream from Marla sent Lorremy running outside. Then Curly whipped a few tools from his pockets, and in less than a minute he had one corner of the stove-base lifted.

A single glance was enough. There was a big wad of notes in Simon Docwra's plant.

Curly left them, and had the stove back in its place, by the time

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Lorremy returned, cursing the carelessness of women because Marla had let the horses stray out on the road. In ten minutes more the deal was completed, and Curly harnessed the horse he had been riding, to take the waggon back to his own camp.

When everything was quiet he took out the waggon-stove, lifted the iron base, and sighed relief as he fished out the packet of notes. The purchase of the caravan had left him two pounds in the world.

Then he sat down by his camp-fire, and smiled at his new waggon, and thought of himself and Marla travelling the road in it. He watched the smoke of his fire going up, and saw good pictures in that smoke, as a Romany man, or anyone else, will at such a time.

He thrust the notes away in his pockets as he heard someone coming, then started up in pleasure when he saw it was Marla. In delighted eagerness he told her the story, and they kissed by the fireside before they sat down. Then he showed her his money—five hundred and fifty pounds.

The girl drew a long sighing breath as she handled the notes, a hundred and ten of them, each with the words " Bank of Engford " on it. Unlike Curly, Marla could read, and she knew the trick that had been played on her lover.

In a second she remembered that Knapper Carey had been whispering and laughing with her father a few days earlier, and she realized that it was one more of Lorremy's wicked jokes.

" The big horse-market at Carlisle tomorrow," Curly was saying eagerly. " What a start, darlin,' with five hundred and fifty pounds now instead of just a hundred and two." Already he was planning the future, when he could show Lorremy that he had money of his own, and so get his consent to the marriage with Marla.

It nearly broke the girl's heart to stop him, but the thought of his going to Carlisle market with the forged notes decided her. She stood up suddenly from the fire.

" Curly," she said. " *You'd* laugh, and I'd laugh, if Lorremy had done this to anyone else." She watched her lover's face. " To take a man's last hundred pounds, and to let himself be swindled —out of five hundred and fifty pounds in worthless notes ! "

" Worthless ! " Curly started up from the fire, and stared.

" They're the old swindle-notes that he's had for years," Marla told him. She giggled in spite of herself, and Curly looked at her angrily.

" What's the—" he commenced.

" Give me that money," Marla ordered. Slowly, reluctantly, young Docwra pushed the roll of notes forward, and then stopped.

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" But it's Carlisle *market* tomorrow," he protested, and looked on in mystification as Marla exploded into helpless laughter.

" Give me that money," the girl repeated. " And don't ask me any questions. We'll see about Carlisle." Still laughing at Curly's woebegone expression, she took the roll of notes and turned away.

Next morning at dawn Curly looked and listened, wistfully, as Lorremy and the others of the Romany men went by, on the road to Carlisle horse-market. Then, none too cheerfully, he set about cooking his breakfast. He was half-way through the meal when Marla arrived in haste.

" Here," she began without delay, and handed Curly a roll of notes. " Get you to Carlisle, my dark one. And good luck." Curly took the roll eagerly, then shrugged his shoulders and went slack again.

" Even if I wanted to pass the dud money off," he said at last, " Lorremy'd tell everyone, and make me a laughing-stock, or worse. No, darlin', we'll just have to wait. Besides," he added with a return to his old swaggering manner, " we have a waggon anyway." Marla only smiled.

" Get you to Carlisle," she repeated. " Now we'll show my dad who has the last laugh. I've swopped the notes."

Curly gasped. Then a slow, wide grin spread over his face.

" One of Lorremy's own tricks," he chuckled delightedly. " One of his very own." Then he turned suddenly serious. " But he'll skin you alive, darlin'," he objected, " when he finds out." Marla shook her head, still smiling.

" There's a big pile of notes," she told Curly, " and I put the dud ones right at the bottom—he mightn't notice for months. And even if he does, he can take a joke as well as make one. And even if he can't it serves him right and—and now get you to Carlisle," she finished breathlessly. Without another word Curly turned away to saddle his horse.

In Carlisle horse-market it seemed that Curly could do nothing wrong. Within an hour he had paid two hundred pounds for a bunch of colts that he knew would be worth three hundred down in Lancashire. By mid-day he had spent his five hundred and fifty pounds, on horses that might well be worth double within a few weeks. Then he rode back to his camp, in leisurely fashion, day-dreaming.

Lorremy had hardly finished breakfast next morning, when Marla and Curly presented themselves at the Loveridge camp-fire. Through a barrage of jeering remarks about donkey-dealing, Curly explained that he wanted to marry Marla. The old man roared with laughter.

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"Speak up," he ordered. "Ye know Marla's not for any penniless market-loafer. Speak up—how much money have ye?"

"I haven't a pound in the world," said Curly, and grinned cheerfully. "But," he added, as Lorremy began to laugh again, "I have horses worth six hundred pounds, and they'll maybe be worth twelve hundred before the month is out."

Old Lorremy turned from his daughter to Curly, and back to Marla again, nodding in silence as he searched their eyes. For a full minute nothing was said. Then suddenly the old man slapped Curly on the shoulder, and held Marla's shoulder with his other hand.

"All right," he said. "If ye must ye must. Wait a minute," he enjoined, as the young couple impulsively turned towards one another. "Wait a minute." He went into his caravan, and returned with a large black box.

"There's no harm in your seeing this—now," he said with a hard grin. "It'll all be yours and Marla's one day. But not for a while, maybe," he added with a hoarse chuckle. "Not for a while."

"We don't—" commenced Curly indignantly, and Lorremy waved a large brown hand in a tolerant gesture.

"Course not," he agreed. "But I've always intended Marla to have five hundred pounds when she was married. Well, ye both look as if ye were in a hurry—so ye'd better take it now." He opened the black box and paused for a second.

Curly and Marla saw a thick pile of banknotes, eight or nine thousand pounds at least. Lorremy lifted one banknote from the top of the pile, and then replaced it.

"How much would you say that waggon was worth?" he asked. "The one I sold you."

"Fifty quid," said Curly promptly. "Say forty-eight," he added a second later, with his usual grin.

"Say fifty," corrected Lorremy, and grinned in turn. "Well, you can have your other fifty back; it makes no difference to me—no difference at all."

Slowly, ceremoniously and with a perfectly straight face, he counted out five hundred and fifty pounds—from the bottom of the pile.

* * *

CONSOLATION PRIZE

Whose love is given over-well
Shall look on Helen's face in hell,
Whilst they whose love is thin and wise
May view John Knox in paradise.

DOROTHY PARKER

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SHIP OF ICE

It was out of the tranquil blue that the warning came . . .

by EDMUND GILLIGAN

HAD there been one doryman on the *Mara*'s deck at that instant, the warning would have been seen or heard. The schooner certainly would have escaped. There was no such man. Captain Sylvester had left the helm in order to go below to look at the barometer in his cabin. The only other men on board were the engineer and the cook. The engineer had stopped the motor in his usual hope of finding out what was really the trouble with it. The cook knew the Grand Banks and the December of the Banks as well as any man in the *Mara*'s crew. He was on duty—that is, he had a batch of bread in his oven and a score of apple-pies ready to go in. He had no business out of his galley. There were also two veterans of the Banks in the forecastle bunks. They didn't count. Six days of hauling halibut had knocked them out.

There were eighteen other men in the crew, all dorymen of the old school, who could rig for cod or rig for halibut and kill one or the other in next to no time when the vessel was fishing. These men were not aboard at the moment. They were in the nine dories that lay on the ends, which is to say that each dory had set its long line of trawl, its hundreds of hooks and had tied up to the black ball-buoy that marked the farther anchorage of the trawl. Those men were down on the bottom boards to keep out of the wind, out of the winter that they had a right to expect at any hour. Five dories lay strung out to leeward, four to windward, of the schooner.

Almost two hours had passed since the last baited hook had been heaved over by the willow heaving sticks. They were waiting now for the *Mara*'s horn to blow the fishing signal. This time it would also be the signal for home and Gloucester, or, at the worst, a smart run to Boston, where halibut were bringing the highest price in ten years. There were sixty thousand pounds of that fine fish in her pens, each pen a small fortune for those concerned.

Beyond the windward dories, and steering on a southerly course, were three American destroyers. Between them and the eastern edge of Whale Deep, where the *Mara* fished, three miles or so of black water heaved. Not a white-cap broke it. The warships were

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making knots. Each carried a whale spit at her bow, a divided arc of glittering spray. They had a hasty look about them, perhaps because the next landfall meant Boston and a fair night's sleep.

Directly to the north, and on a northerly course, a three-masted schooner, brightened by a deckload of lumber, showed all her wealth of sail. She was farther away than the destroyers. The sea between her and the *Mara* ran green and flat. To the eastward, and still farther away, a Coastguard cutter lay on a north-east course, perhaps a little east of that. Where she drove away, the sea slanted in a swell, very long and entirely blue under the noonday sun. At exactly high noon the cutter reached a position that called for a change in her course. The change was to due east. This brought her wake into sight. It soon vanished in the blue water.

Now in the month of June, in those latitudes, a blue day is one thing. It means what it says: peace. Blueness in December is another matter. It can mean anything: peace or war, life or death. It was out of that blue, only half a mile from the cutter's vanishing wake, that the warning came—a big sea, a roller, rising abruptly out of the calm water.

It grew a little, and began its drive down the edge of the Deep, where the water, even in October, is often freezing in temperature at thirty fathoms. Once formed, the sea sped for a mile unchanged. It then began to lessen in size, so that it sped past the leeward dories, scarcely lifting them at all. Not one head was raised over the gunwales to see what was going on. The dorymen were too cold, too weary for any such curiosity, especially in a wind working down to zero.

The roller came on towards the schooner. It grew a little, not in its real substance, but in a mile-long crest, that glittered and became glasslike. At times the crest tossed up frosty hoops of crystal. A little later, when only a cable's length of calm lay between it and the *Mara*, the wave heaved up bushes of crystal. Some of these broke at once; others lived long enough to catch the sunbeams in rainbow bursts.

All these shapes were, indeed, crystals; for the spray was freezing as it sped. In the end, before the sea passed under the *Mara*, the force of it threw some of these crystals over her rail. The wind carried the crystals up into the dory nests and into the single dory there. Others swept against the cabin skylight, and this was the warning to the *Mara*.

The rattle of that icy fall wasn't loud enough on the cabin skylight to break Captain Sylvester's thought. He was studying the barometer, his eyes straining under the lamp which he had forgotten to turn up. He now did so.

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Oddly enough, it was the flame of the oil wick that stirred him more than the barometer reading. The pressure had put the barometer off nearly a point since breakfast. The pressure did something else to the lamp. He stood staring at it, swaying a little to the tune of the sea, just as the lamp swayed.

He was a broad man, perhaps half an inch under average height, and of middle age. He looked the firm man that he was. He had lost some of his flesh in the recent days. Halibuters weren't easy to find, and he had taken, out of the goodness of his heart, certain elders of the Banks who would have been better off under their own roofs.

" I'm not so sure." He said those words in an unusually loud voice—loud at least for a man alone. He repeated them when he turned towards the companion-way. He had just pushed back the slide, thus letting the noises of the sea into the quiet cabin, when the wave tossed its crystals overhead. His frown changed slightly. When he reached the deck, there was nothing new to catch his eye. The crystals had vanished in the warmth of the deck. Nevertheless, he looked anxiously round and swept the strings of dories with a shrewd glance. He went to the wheel and carried it up a spoke or two.

He soon learned that the temperature was dropping rapidly. Something in the air or in his skilled senses disturbed him so much that he came out with a sentence much more serious than it sounds : " I don't like this ! "

He left the wheel, walked slowly forward and dropped down into the forecastle. He turned into the galley and spoke to the cook rather casually, not because he didn't care for the man's opinion, but because he knew it would be offered at once if anything—anything at all—had happened in the little time he had spent in the cabin. The coal fire in the broad stove burned red. The loaves were done. The fragrance mixed richly with the scent of apple parings.

The captain said, " Apple-pies, Billy ? "

" Apple-pies, yes." The cook didn't look up from his hand, which was delicately drawing a gull feather dipped in melted butter over the tops of his pies.

" I was just saying to myself, Billy, that I don't like this."

The cook understood that this dislike was a matter of the sea, not of his apple-pies. This time he looked up. He straightened up to his full, lean height, a foot or so more than the little captain's. His removal from the ruddy flush of the stove caused a startling change in his appearance. Bent in the glow, he had seemed to be even younger than the Captain. Now his years showed up. He was a grey man.

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He looked down into the captain's eyes and spoke earnestly. "No more do I, captain." He waited for a reply. None came. He added, "I took their temperatures again. The pneumonia isn't in them yet, and maybe will not be, God grant it."

"I never should have taken them. Never!" The captain spoke much louder than usual, as he had in the cabin.

"I wouldn't worry about that, captain. Not now I wouldn't." For this, the cook used even a gentler tone, which showed his affection for the anxious man swaying before him.

The captain turned without a word and went to the bunks near the peak, where his old dorymen lay under blankets, their hands folded in sleep. He looked closely at those hands, marking with a sigh the dark signs of frostbite, newly added to the old. He pulled off his gloves and laid his hands on their foreheads in a search for the fever sign. The first doryman did not waken.

The second, without opening his eyes, whispered a sentence, "The cutter . . . she gone?"

"Aye!"

After pondering a bit, the captain went on deck. There he looked all around the sea, pausing in his gradual sweep at each dory. He turned his glance upward into the empty blue. He found nothing, absolutely nothing that was new. Nevertheless, he hurried aft and, with an expression of dismay, he whirled the crank of the *Mara*'s horn.

The fishing signal bolted over the sea harshly, roundly. He waited, his head turned towards the windward dories. When he saw the first man rise, he whirled the crank again—this time with an expression that had changed to something near to viciousness.

All the dories began to fish. The buoys came in fast over the sides, the anchors more slowly because they were down in twenty fathoms. The men in the dory bows bent over the gurdy wheels and began hauling.

The captain watched closely until the first halibut came up, flat and grey, to the nearest of the windward dories. It was a big fish that required the gaff. He watched the blow and the dragging, upward movement of the fish against the black side.

The dory mate rose in the middle place to handle fish and trawl as these came aft to him. Soon the same action had been repeated several times in each dory, and the dories began to move closer to the *Mara* at an almost imperceptible pace. The wind was blowing hard from about south-west. The captain could tell that it was hurting the dorymen. His concern for them kept his face darkened.

At the fishing signal, the engineer had come up. The wind hurt him worse than it had hurt the others because he had come

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from a warm place. He kept looking at the captain sideways. The captain sent him below with a nod. Presently the engine started with a burst of small explosions. It failed, and started again. The *Mara* moved forward slowly.

A dory finished hauling. At once, its sail went up and it began a deep, laborious passage towards the vessel, which moved briskly to the meeting.

The dory came alongside. The cook came from his shelter between the dory nests and handed down the pitchforks. Without a word, the dorymen began forking their fish over the rail. They worked in desperate haste, their half-closed eyes following each fish in its flight only as far as the rail. When the dory had been cleared, the men handed up the forks, the buoys and the tubs of trawl. Once the gear was in, they pushed the hooks into the straps, slid over the rail and helped the cook haul the dory up to the nest.

Two more dories came up. For such weather, they were both overloaded. These dorymen were younger men and in better shape. They forked the fish over with smooth, strong movements; yet, towards the end, they, too, faltered. They had nothing to say. Their cheeks were dark with cold.

A wind, plainly blowing against the main breeze, ripped across the sea and struck full against the *Mara*. Out of nowhere, the squall followed. Snow blew across the water in a slanting stream. A moment later a mighty burst of hail drummed down in a straight fall.

The younger men, after going below for a gulp of coffee, came on deck to lend a hand. The other dories had vanished in the squall. They soon appeared again, the bowed men still hauling away in the boats, their mates striking at big fish with gobsticks and curling the trawl into the tubs. They had only five minutes of work before the hail came down again in a rattling torrent. The hail blew off; a grey rush of sleet succeeded it.

The captain shouted at the helm. He did so with such strength and anguish that his shout turned into something like a scream. "Cut! Cut!"

He brought the wheel up and lifted his right hand in a signal to a doryman straddled near the break. This man ran to the horn and in three whirls sent the alarm to the working dories ordering them to cease hauling, cut trawls and come aboard.

In less than an hour the last dory was swayed into the nests. The watch was set. The captain took the helm to rest his men. He swung the *Mara* on to the course for home, long days and longer nights away in the face of a growing head wind.

Before she settled down, before Captain Sylvester could judge

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what lay ahead, another man came to the helm and told him the cook wanted him forward. He found the cook swaying in the galley, a little torch turned on to the medical thermometer, which he alone could read. The captain required no words. He saw the medicine chest open.

"They take any food, cook?"

"Tom took a sip of tea. Didn't keep it." He shook the thermometer briskly and put it back into its case. "Two more degrees up now, captain. Both about the same. It's in them, captain." He meant the pneumonia.

The captain stared down at his hands; he then took his place at the table and picked up his knife and fork. The men at the first table, who had been waiting for this action, did likewise. The cook put down two trays of beefsteaks, a platter of butter, and came up again with a tray of the fresh loaves, cut into thick slices. He stepped back into the galley and came out with large dishes of succotash and green beans. He set kettles of tea and coffee at the galley end of the table and put out opened tins of milk.

They all ate in an unusual silence. The hands that reached for the food were still dark with the cold. Their hearts were worse off. They had worked eighteen hours that day and for the five days past, much of it by torchlight. This wasn't unusual in the December fishery. They could take it, just as they could take the good money they earned by those hours. All the same, they had poured out too much of their strength.

There was another cause for the silence. They all knew that the men in the peak bunks were dying or might be dying soon. They also knew that the captain had cut trawls for the sake of those old friends. Worse still, the dorymen knew that at any moment the captain might face another and final choice between the living and the half-lost.

They wanted to know what he was going to do. Their tradition kept them from making any inquiry. Tradition also provided for their silence, which became a loud question: how long will he plug into this head wind?

The captain knew what was in their minds and hearts. Even so, he ate heartily, set them a good example. His very steadiness deepened their alarm because, partially, it answered their question. He was eating like a man who expects not to eat again soon.

The open choice came sooner than they expected.

The watch came down and said, "The ice is making."

He spoke to the captain. At the end of his sentence, the watch lifted his glance to the table and met all the other staring eyes. The vessel rolled, fell into a long, roaring stagger, and recovered so strongly that the watch had to reach out to a bunk for support.

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The man was all but exhausted. Two men rose in their places and pulled down fresh gloves and heavy jackets from their bunks. The captain nodded to them as they passed in silence to the companion-way.

Half an hour later, while the second table was being served under the eye of the captain, the bow watch came down. He had a short wooden maul in his hand. He was trembling with exhaustion. His Cape Ann hat had turned into a helmet of frozen sleet. He tried to speak, struck feebly at his mouth, and simply stood there.

"Eh?" The captain stared at him.

The doryman finally achieved the words through frosty lips, "Can't keep up with it. No."

Two more men rose from their places, pulled on their gear and climbed up the companion-way. When the slide opened the chief sound, besides the roaring of the sea, was a jangling, a noise as of the crushing of glass.

The captain said, "Life lines." And: "String them out." A man directly across the table pulled on his reefer. Speaking again in the same strained voice, the captain said, "Torches."

The captain went to the sick men and heard one of them speaking gently, steadily, to an old woman far, far away. He left them and went on deck.

The first flight of spray struck him and froze instantly on the sleeves of his jacket. The schooner pitched badly, then rolled so far over that he fell against the starboard dories. He clung to the bottom dory, waited for a foothold and then struck his hand against the gunwale. It was thick with ice.

He moved aft and then stepped back between the nests. There the sleet had frozen into a drift, more than a foot thick at the fore-mast. A sea struck her bow and broke over the top dories. Its spray froze in the air and fell upon him in a hail. Ice formed round his boots. He looked down and saw that all his clothes were white with frost.

There was not one part of the *Mara* free of ice. The oil torches glared on it and showed him the dorymen striking with mauls and axes. Others shovelled the sleet and broken ice over the rails. They all worked awkwardly, striking short blows and not many of them. And there were not enough mauls and axes.

He saw two men clinging to the lines and feebly striking with gaffs. He made his way aft. Two men were lashed to the wheel. He had considerable trouble getting down into the cabin. There he drew an axe out of a rack on the side of the locker. He went on deck and struggled forward to join the men in the bow, where the real battle against the ice was waged. He struck hard, drove the blade

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deep and twisted it free. Chunks of ice started away. The sea often washed them aft, where they stopped and began to freeze in again.

The captain now hoped that the *Mara* had worked around the Deep, had left the shoal and might soon strike deeper, warmer water, for the course lay over the steep fall into a hundred fathoms. Yet he could not be sure that she was making way at all. In the best of circumstances, the engine gave her only eight knots. In the worst, she had made three. And there was nothing in her history like this struggle for a mile, a half mile.

He felt justified in the attempt to get away from the shoal because he knew the extraordinary breaking of the sea was due as much to the shoals as it was to the head wind. Nevertheless, that wind and his stubborn passage into it were the chief causes of the encroaching ice. He had only to turn her away from the wind, to give up the voyage home, and he might see her clear of ice before daybreak, if the sun shone and the gale abated. His stricken men forbade the retreat, and he brought his reason and his skill to back up his heart.

The man at his right hand began moving aft, foot by foot, his maul helpless against the rapid thickening of the ice. Captain Sylvester took that man's place, drove his blade deeper and deeper, and wrenched off sheaths and blocks of ice. An electric bulb, strung to the weather rigging, flashed on, adding its glare to the wavering light of the torches. He saw, in new dismay, that the rails forward were buried. When he looked beyond to mark the approach of another roller, he saw the thing that ended his battle.

To windward half a mile or so, the sea whirled in a tower of crystal spray that spouted far against the sky. This was the Pinnacle Rock. It usually lay with a fathom or two over it. It wasn't fear of the rock that drove him over to the man striking at his side. It was the knowledge that the *Mara* would not be able to get past the rock. He had to turn her out of the wind and wait.

"Below!"

The doryman backed away from his task. The captain made his way aft and sent the men forward. He gathered them all up, took the helm and put the wheel down easily. Slowly answering, the *Mara* came out of the wind and then, in an easy swing, she came all the way round and began the drift he counted on. The current and wind, working together, drove her away from the rock and back into Whale Deep, where she had been fishing.

He lashed the helm, went down into the cabin and told the engineer to stop the engine. He thought it well to do this before it broke down. He sent the engineer forward to get his dinner and he himself opened the damper of the cabin stove to let the fire

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burn out quickly, for the ice might crush the skylight and knock the stove asunder. He returned to the wheel. He soon found that no man could stay there long and live in such a sea, in such cold, and on such poor foothold. He went forward and joined his men.

He didn't mean to speak, yet he found himself saying, "The ice won't increase its grip on her now. You can turn in."

They pulled off their boots and rolled into their bunks. The cook came out of the galley, a towel in his hands and a plate turning in it. He looked round calmly and went back to his dishes. Almost at once the forecastle began to grow cold. The cook went into the peak and untied a roll of blankets, which he shook out and placed over the two sick men. It was this action and the increasing cold that told the captain the cook had let his fire go out too.

The captain stretched out on the locker and laid his arm across his eyes.

The ice did go on forming, just the same. At midnight, a heavier fall of sleet began. It froze on the *Mara*'s thicknesses of frozen spray. The seas that rolled from the shoals into Whale Deep also ran over her stern and froze, and pushed up strands of ice that grew quickly on her bow and rails.

The ice came aboard faster and faster. It turned the wheel into a block of ice and sealed the cabin companion-way. Inch adding to inch and foot to foot, the ice clambered up over the skylight, smashed in the glass and closed the skylight off.

The flow of ice at the bow and between the dory nests rose higher and higher, and spread aft until, long before the break of day, the two waves met, pressed against each other, then turned to form another thickness, grey as steel, hard as oak. The ice reached up for the oil cans of the torches and smothered the wicks. It climbed the rigging and broke the wire for the bulb.

The *Mara* became quite dark. She rode deeper and deeper, quickening the assault and conquest of the ice until, at last, when the blue day burst out of the waters of the Deep, she wallowed, a shapeless monster, a monstrous crystal, sinking inch by inch to the point of foundering.

Nothing of her remained in sight, except her only spar, the foremast, painted to the trees by frost, and gleaming white as once it gleamed in the old days when Gloucestermen worked under sail and she, fleetest of all the schooners, her masts and topmasts spread with canvas in its grace, fell over onto the windward tack and raced for home, her rail under, her flight a joy to all men.

Even the blue day made little light in the forecastle, where they lay, silent and sleepless, staring at nothing, waiting. When the sick

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old men cried out in their fever, no one answered. Once, and only once, the captain rose in his final anger and hurled himself against the slide of the companion-way, tearing with his hands against the wood his axe had vainly shattered in the night. The ice stared through.

The cook rose in the gloom and took the captain by the arm and whispered, "Would you care now to say anything to them? Anything at all, captain?"

His heart gone, and all his hope gone, the captain replied in a low voice, and the cook, looking calmly over the captain's bowed head, said aloud, "The captain says good-bye to all hands and thanks for work well done. Her wood won't take this no more, he says, and founder she must. If he made a mistake, he says, it was his heart that made it, his care for the sick men. He says that truly, and I know it to be true. So good-bye to one and all, and God bless you one and all, the captain says, and I, too, I says it."

A man in the double bunk near the peak bunks said, "It's all right, captain. It's all right, cook. Nobody's blaming nobody."

After that, they let the silence alone.

At midnight, according to her exact orders, the cutter had reached the eastern point of her patrol and had come around into the same gale to begin the last, returning leg of the voyage. This course, also by exact orders, lay to the westward and thence into the Deep, where, for many a long season, she had cruised among the Gloucestermen and the French trawlers that fished the Deep and off the ledge. At daybreak she was well into the Deep.

At noon, while her commander, John Bogart, was taking a cup of coffee in the flying bridge, he himself made out that curious shape of ice a mile to windward.

Captain Bogart was famed for his knowledge of ice. He had long been on the ice patrol and had been among the bergs and on them so often that they used to say he spent his leaves aboard them, fishing in their freshwater lakes and sliding down their snowy slopes. The appearance of the ice object startled him, there being no other ice about. He spoke to the helmsman.

The cutter began a sweep beyond the ice. The gale had long since blown itself out. Nevertheless, the cutter started pumping oil to windward of the ice. The current slowly swept the slick around the ice until the sea became more flat.

Presently a boat shot away from under the lee side of the cutter. In five minutes the first of the seamen set his ice creepers on the mound. Two more followed him up the slope. The second man listened to the first and then lifted his signal lamp.

"A schooner. Alive."

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At this, Captain Bogart turned to his executive officer and said, "Clean her off."

The lamp on the mound said, "Steam hose, please."

"That's a smart boy," said Captain Bogart.

The motor launch dropped down and took on a hose from a hatchway. The launch moved forward, came alongside the *Mara*, received the first boarding-party, and signalled to the bridge. The steam took some time to hit the nozzle, which turned the heat directly on to the ridges of ice. These ridges opened, slowly at first, then rapidly. Oblongs and sheaves of ice slid into the oil.

The signalman said to the bridge, "Gloucester." A moment later, when more ice had fallen from her name-board, he added, "The *Mara*."

This disturbed Captain Bogart's calm. A little blood left his cheeks. He pressed his teeth down on his lip and said to the executive officer, "Did you read that as *Mara*?"

The officer nodded.

The captain said to the quartermaster, "She's down by the head, and dangerously so. Tell them to lay off the stern and take the bow."

The launch moved up a length and the live steam attacked the terrible burden across the *Mara's* bow. It began to crack. A ton of it slipped off and struck the hose.

A minute later the steam attacked again. The launch passed three times around the *Mara*, and then withdrew. Ten men with axes went over the rails, which were now showing clear.

The signalman, standing near the helm, said to the bridge, "Cabin empty. Send engineer."

The launch took off the engineer and put him and his mate aboard the *Mara*. They went below to the engine room.

By this time the axes had cleared away the forecastle companion-way. The signalman said to the bridge, "Captain and crew in forecastle. All alive." He came nearer to the companion-way, listened to the shouts from within, and sent, "All well." A moment later, "Correction. Two men sick."

He sent the last message twice, but by that time another boat was down and the surgeon and his men were on the way. They went aboard and quickly sent two stretchers down to the launch.

The engine of the *Mara* started. Her propeller turned over rapidly and then idled. A number of dorymen appeared on deck. They walked aft and sat here and there in the sunshine. When the boarding-party began to go over the side into their boats, Captain Sylvester came up from the forecastle.

He held his cap in his hand. He stared into it for a while, as if it held a great secret. He put it on, lifted his gaze to the cutter's

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bridge, and touched one finger to his cap. He spoke to one of the cutter's men, who, in turn, spoke to the signalman.

The signalman said to the bridge, " Captain Sylvester's compliments to Captain Bogart, and he is much obliged. Compliments of the crew, and they are much obliged. *Mara* will proceed now."

Captain Bogart gave the nod to this. He watched the *Mara* get under way. He said to the executive officer, " That's Captain Sylvester at the wheel now. I've known him for years. A kindly man. And a good seaman. It must have been bad here last night. Very bad."

* * *

LOVE THROUGH THE AGES

Love is a talkative passion, said the Bishop, and poets have been talkative for an astonishingly long time. And though each wears his rue with a difference, the vein is much the same. Can you give the author and source of each of these ten tributes to the eternal He and the Probably Impossible She ? And can you place them in order of writing ? The answers are on page 77.

1. *O the glory of the winning were she won !*

2. *Perdition catch my soul,*
But I do love thee !

3. *How fair and how pleasant art thou,*
O love, for delights !

4. *And I will come again, my Luve,*
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

5. *Blou northerne wynd !*
Send thou me my suetyng !

6. *How do I love thee ? Let me count the ways.*

7. *My true love hath my heart, and I have his,*
By just exchange one for another given.

8. *And for bonnie Annie Laurie*
I'd lay me doun and dee.

9. *But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,*
And loved the sorrows of your changing face.

10. *I could not love thee, Dear, so much,*
Loved I not Honour more.

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APRIL WITCH

"Say it for me," she said, "say you love him with all your heart"

by RAY BRADBURY

INTO the air, over the valleys, under the stars, above a river, a pond, a road, flew Cecy. Invisible as new spring winds, fresh as the breath of clover rising from twilight fields, she flew. She soared in doves as soft as white ermine, stopped in trees and lived in blossoms, showering away in petals when the breeze blew. She perched in a lime-green frog, cool as mint by a shining pool. She trotted in a brambly dog and barked to hear echoes from distant barns. She lived in new April grasses, in sweet clear liquids rising from the earth.

It's spring, thought Cecy. *I'll be in every living thing in the world tonight.*

Now she inhabited neat crickets on the tar-pool roads, now prickled in dew on an iron gate. Hers was an adaptably quick mind flowing unseen upon Illinois winds on this one evening of her life when she was just seventeen.

I want to be in love, she said.

She had said it at supper. And her parents had widened their eyes and stiffened back in their chairs.

"Patience" had been their advice. "Remember, you're remarkable. Our whole family is odd and remarkable. We can't mix or marry with ordinary folk. We'd lose our magical powers if we did. You wouldn't want to lose your ability to travel by magic, would you? Then be careful. Be careful!"

But in her high bedroom, Cecy had touched perfume to her throat and stretched out, trembling and apprehensive, on her four-poster, as a moon the colour of milk rose over Illinois country, turning rivers to cream and roads to platinum.

Yes, she sighed, *I'm one of an odd family. We sleep by day and fly by night like black kites on the wind. If we want, we can sleep in moles through the winter, in the warm earth. I can live in anything at all—a pebble, a crocus or a praying mantis. I can leave my plain, bony body behind and send my mind far out for adventure.*

Now.

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The wind whipped her away over fields and meadows. She saw the warm spring lights of cottages and farms glowing with twilight colours.

If I can't be in love myself, because I'm plain and odd, then I'll be in love through someone else, she told herself.

Outside a farm-house in the spring night, a dark-haired girl, no more than nineteen, drew up water from a deep stone well. She was singing.

Cecy fell—a green leaf—into the well. She lay in the tender moss of the well, gazing up through dark coolness. Now she quickened in a fluttering, invisible amoeba. Now, in a water droplet! At last, within a cold cup, she felt herself lifted to the girl's warm lips. There was a soft night sound of drinking.

Cecy looked out from the girl's eyes. She entered into the dark head and gazed from the shining eyes at the hands pulling the rough rope. She listened through the shell ears to this girl's world. She smelled a particular universe through these delicate nostrils, felt this special heart beating, beating. Felt this strange tongue move with singing.

Does she know I'm here? thought Cecy.

The girl gasped. She stared into the night meadows. "Who's there?"

No answer.

Only the wind, whispered Cecy.

"Only the wind." The girl laughed at herself, but shivered.

It was a good body, this girl's body. It held bones of finest slender ivory, hidden and roundly fleshed. This brain was like a pink tea-rose hung in darkness, and there was cider wine in this mouth. The lips lay firm on the white, white teeth, and the brows arched neatly at the world, and the hair blew soft and fine on her milky neck. The pores knitted small and close. The nose tilted at the moon and the cheeks glowed with small fires. The body drifted with feather balances from one motion to another, and seemed always singing to itself.

Being in this body, this head, was like basking in a hearth fire, living in the purr of a sleeping cat, stirring in warm creek waters that flowed by night to the sea.

I'll like it here, thought Cecy.

"What?" asked the girl, as if she'd heard a voice.

What's your name? asked Cecy carefully.

"Ann Leary." The girl twitched. "Now why should I say that out loud?"

Ann, Ann, whispered Cecy. *Ann, you're going to be in love.*

As if to answer this, a great roar sprang from the road, a clatter

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and a ring of wheels on gravel. A tall man drove up in a dog-cart, holding the reins high with his monstrous arms, his smile glowing across the yard.

"Ann!"

"Is that you, Tom?"

"Who else?" Leaping from the dog-cart, he tied the reins to the fence.

"I'm not speaking to you!" Ann whirled, the bucket in her hands slopping.

No, cried Cecy.

Ann froze. She looked at the hills and the first spring stars. She stared at the man named Tom. Cecy made her drop the bucket.

"Look what you've done!" Tom ran up.

"Look what you made me do!"

He wiped her shoes with a handkerchief, laughing.

"Get away!" She kicked at his hands, but he laughed again, and gazing down on him from miles away, Cecy saw the turn of his head, the size of his skull, the flare of his nostril, the gleam of his eye, the girth of his shoulder and the hard strength of his hands doing this delicate thing with the handkerchief. Peering down from the secret attic of this lovely head, Cecy yanked a hidden ventriloquist's wire and the pretty mouth popped wide: "Thank you!"

"Oh, so you have manners?" The smell of leather on his hands, the smell of the horse rose from his clothes into the tender nostrils, and Cecy, far, far away over night meadows and flowered fields, stirred as with some dream in her bed.

"Not for you, no," said Ann.

Hush, speak gently, said Cecy. She moved Ann's fingers out towards Tom's head.

Ann snatched them back. "I've gone mad!"

"You have." He nodded, smiling, but bewildered. "Were you going to touch me then?"

"I don't know. Oh, go away!" Her cheeks glowed with pink charcoals.

"Why don't you run? I'm not stopping you." Tom got up. "Have you changed your mind? Will you go to the dance with me tonight? It's special. Tell you why, later."

"No," said Ann.

Yes, cried Cecy. *I've never danced. I want to dance. I've never worn a long gown, all rustly. I want that. I want to dance all night. I've never known what it's like to be in a woman, dancing; father and mother would never permit it. Dogs, cats, locusts, leaves, everything else in the world at one time or another I've known, but*

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never a woman in the spring, never on a night like this. Oh, please, we must go to that dance.

She spread her thought like the fingers of a hand within a new glove.

"Yes," said Ann Leary, "I'll go. I don't know why, but I'll go to the dance with you tonight, Tom."

Now inside, quick, cried Cecy. *You must wash, tell your folks, get your dress ready, out with the iron, into your room.*

"Mother," said Ann, "I've changed my mind!"

The cart was disappearing down the road, the rooms of the farm-house jumped to life, water was boiling for a bath, the coal stove was heating an iron to press the dress, the mother was rushing about with a fringe of hairpins in her mouth.

"What's come over you, Ann? You don't like Tom!"

"That's true." Ann stopped amidst the bustle.

But it's spring, thought Cecy.

"It's spring," said Ann.

And it's a fine night for dancing, thought Cecy.

". . . for dancing," murmured Ann Leary.

Then she was in the tub and the soap creaming on her white-seal shoulders, small nests of soap beneath her arms, and Cecy moving the mouth, making the smile, keeping the actions going. There must be no pause, no hesitation, or the entire pantomime might fall in ruins. Ann Leary must be kept moving, doing, acting, wash here, soap there, now out. Rub with a towel. Now perfume and powder.

"You!" Ann caught herself in the mirror, all whiteness and pinkness, like lilies and carnations. "Who are you tonight?"

I'm a girl seventeen years old. Cecy gazed from her violet eyes. *You can't see me. Do you know I'm here?*

Ann Leary shook her head. "I've rented my body to an April witch, for sure."

Close, very close, laughed Cecy. *Now, on with your dressing.*

The luxury of feeling good clothes move over an ample body. And then the halloo outside.

"Ann, Tom's back!"

"Tell him to wait." Ann sat down suddenly. "Tell him I'm not going to that dance."

"What?" said her mother in the door.

Cecy snapped back into attention. It had been a fatal relaxing, a fatal moment of leaving Ann's body for only an instant. She had heard the distant sound of a horse's hoofs and the dog-cart rambling through moonlit spring country. For a second she thought, *I'll go find Tom and sit in his head and see what it's like to be in a man*

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of twenty-two on a night like this. And so she had started, quickly, across a heather field, but now, like a bird to a cage, flew back, and rustled and beat about in Ann Leary's head.

Ann.

"Tell him to go away!"

Ann, Cecy settled down and spread her thoughts. But Ann had the bit in her mouth now. "No, no, I hate him!"

I shouldn't have left, even for a moment. Cecy poured her mind into the hands of the young girl, into the heart, into the head, softly, softly. *Stand up,* she thought.

Ann stood.

Put on your coat.

Ann put on her coat.

Now, march.

No, thought Ann Leary.

March.

"Ann," said her mother, "don't keep Tom waiting another minute. You get on out there now and no nonsense. What's come over you?"

"Nothing, mother. Good night. We'll be home late."

Ann and Cecy ran together into the spring evening.

A room full of softly dancing pigeons ruffling their quiet, trailing feathers, a room full of peacocks, a room full of rainbow eyes and lights. And in the centre of it, around, around, around, danced Ann Leary.

Oh, it is a fine evening, said Cecy.

"Oh, it's a fine evening," said Ann.

"You're odd," said Tom.

The music whirled them in dimness, in rivers of song, they floated, they bobbed, they sank down, they rose for air, they gasped, they clutched each other like drowning people, and whirled on again, in fan motions, in whispers and sighs, to *Beautiful Ohio.*

Cecy hummed. Ann's lips parted and the music came out.

"Yes, I'm odd," said Cecy through Ann.

"You're not the same," said Tom.

"No, not tonight."

"You're not the Ann Leary I knew."

No, not at all, at all, whispered Cecy, miles and miles away. "No, not at all," said the moved lips.

"I've the funniest feeling," said Tom.

"About what?"

"About you." He held her back and danced her and looked into her glowing face, watching for something. "Your eyes," he said. "I can't understand it."

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Do you see me? asked Cecy.

"Part of you's here, Ann, and part of you's not." Tom turned her carefully, his face uneasy.

"Yes."

"Why did you come with me?"

"I didn't want to come," said Ann.

"Why, then?"

"Something made me."

"What?"

"I don't know." Ann's voice was faintly hysterical.

Now, now, hush, hush, whispered Cecy. *Hush, that's it. Around, around.*

They whispered and rustled and rose and fell away in the dark room, with the music moving and turning them.

"But you did come to the dance," said Tom.

I did, said Cecy.

"Here." And he danced her lightly out of an open door and walked her quietly away from the hall and the music and the people.

They climbed up and sat together in the dog-cart.

"Ann," he said, taking her hands, trembling, "Ann." But the way he said her name, it was as if it wasn't her name. He kept glancing into her pale face and now her eyes were open again. "I used to love you, you know that," he said.

"I know."

"But you've always been fickle and I didn't want to be hurt."

"It's just as well, we're very young," said Ann.

No, I mean to say, I'm sorry, said Cecy.

"What do you mean?" Tom dropped her hands and stiffened.

The night was warm and the smell of the earth shimmered up all about them where they sat, and the fresh trees breathed one leaf against another in a shaking and rustling.

"I don't know," said Ann.

Oh, but I know, said Cecy. *You're tall and you're the finest-looking man in all the world. This is a good evening; this is an evening I'll always remember, being with you.* She put out the alien cold hand to find his reluctant hand again and bring it back, and warm it and hold it very tight.

"But," said Tom, blinking, "tonight you're here, you're there. One minute one way, the next minute another. I wanted to take you to the dance tonight for old times' sake. I meant nothing by it when I first asked you. And then, when we were standing at the well, I knew something had changed, really changed, about you. You were different. There was something new and soft, something—," he groped for a word. "I don't know, I can't

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say. The way you looked. Something about your voice. And I know I'm in love with you again."

No, said Cecy. *With me, with me.*

"And I'm afraid of being in love with you," he said. "You'll hurt me again."

"I might," said Ann.

No, no, I'd love you with all my heart, thought Cecy. *Ann, say it to him, say it for me. Say you'd love him with all your heart.*

Ann said nothing.

Tom moved quietly closer and put his hand up to hold her chin. "I'm going away. I've got a job a hundred miles from here. Will you miss me?"

"Yes," said Ann and Cecy.

"May I kiss you good-bye, then?"

Yes, said Cecy, before anyone else could speak.

He placed his lips to the strange mouth. He kissed the strange mouth and he was trembling.

Ann drew back, then, and sat like a white statue.

Ann, said Cecy, *move your arms, hold him again.*

Ann sat like a carved wooden doll in the moonlight. Again he kissed her lips.

I do love you, whispered Cecy. *I'm here, it's me you saw in her eyes, it's me, and I love you if she never will.*

He moved away and seemed like a man who had run a long distance. He sat beside her. "I don't know what's happening. For a moment there—"

Yes? asked Cecy.

"For a moment I thought," he put his hands to his eyes. "Never mind. Shall I take you home now?"

"Please," said Ann Leary.

He clucked to the horse, snapped the reins wearily and drove the cart away.

They rode in the rustle and slap and motion of the moonlit dog-cart in the still early, only eleven o'clock, spring night, with the shining meadows and sweet fields of clover gliding by.

And Cecy, looking at the fields and meadows, thought it would be worth it, it would be worth everything to be with him from this night on. And she heard her parents' voices again, faintly, "Be careful. You wouldn't want to lose your magical powers, would you—married to a mere mortal? Be careful. You wouldn't want that."

Yes, yes, thought Cecy, *even that I'd give up, here and now, if he would have me. I wouldn't need to roam the spring nights then; I wouldn't need to live in birds and dogs and cats and foxes; I'd need only to be with him. Only him. Only him.*

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The road passed under, whispering.

"Tom," said Ann, at last.

"What?" He stared coldly at the road, the horse, the trees, the sky, the stars.

"If you're ever, in years to come, at any time, in Green Town, Illinois, a few miles from here, will you do me a favour?"

"Perhaps."

"Will you do me the favour of stopping and seeing a friend of mine?" Ann Leary said this haltingly, awkwardly.

"Why?"

"She's a good friend. I've told her of you. I'll give you her address. Just a moment." When the dog-cart stopped at her farm, she drew forth a pencil and paper from her small purse and wrote in the moonlight, pressing the paper to her knee. "There it is. Can you read it?"

He glanced at the paper and nodded, bewildered.

"Cecy Elliott, eleven South St. James Street, Green Town, Illinois," he said.

"Will you visit her some day?" asked Ann.

"Some day," he said.

"Promise?"

"What has this to do with us?" he cried savagely. "What do I want with names and papers?" He crumpled the paper into a tight ball and shoved it in his coat.

Oh, please, promise, begged Cecy.

". . . promise," said Ann.

"All right, all right! Now let me be!" he shouted.

I'm tired, thought Cecy. *I can't stay; I have to go home. I'm weakening. I've only the power to stay out a few hours like this, in the night, travelling, travelling. But before I go—*

". . . before I go," said Ann.

She kissed Tom on the lips.

This is me kissing you, said Cecy.

Tom held her off and looked at Ann Leary and looked deep, deep inside. He said nothing, but his face began to relax slowly, very slowly, and the lines vanished away, and his mouth softened from its hardness, and he looked deep again into the moonlit face held here before him.

Then he put her off the dog-cart and without so much as good night was driving swiftly down the road.

Cecy let go. Ann Leary, crying out, released from prison, it seemed, raced up the moonlit path to her house and slammed the door.

Cecy lingered for only a little while. In the eyes of a cricket she saw the spring night world. In the eyes of a frog she sat for

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a lonely moment by a pool.

In the eyes of a night bird she looked down from a tall, moon-haunted elm and saw the lights go out in two farm-houses, one here, one a mile away. She thought of herself and her family, and her strange power, and the fact that no one in the family had ever married any one of the people in this great wide world out here beyond the hills.

Tom?

Her weakening mind flew in a night bird under the trees and over deep fields of wild mustard. *Have you still got the paper, Tom?*

Will you come by some day, some year, some time, to see me? Will you know me then? Will you look in my face and remember then where it was you saw me last, and know that you love me as I love you, with all my heart for all time?

She paused in the cool night air, a million miles from towns and people, above farms and continents and rivers and hills. *Tom?*

Tom was asleep. It was deep night; his clothes were hung on chairs or folded neatly over the end of the bed. And in one silent, carefully upflung hand upon the white pillow by his head was a small piece of paper with writing on it.

Slowly, slowly, a fraction of an inch at a time, his fingers closed down upon the note and held it tightly.

And he did not even stir or notice when a blackbird, faintly, wondrously, beat softly for a moment against the clear moon crystals of the window-pane, then fluttering quietly, stopped and flew away towards the east over the sleeping earth.

* * *

CROSSED CHEQUE

A prairie farmer had always been so busy working his land that he never had time to learn to read and write. Consequently, when he struck oil on his farm, and the money came pouring in, he was unable to sign his cheques. But his bank agreed to honour two Xs as his signature.

This arrangement proved quite satisfactory until he presented a cheque signed XXX. The puzzled bank-clerk asked for an explanation.

"Oh," said the farmer, "I seem to be getting along so well that I thought it was about time I had a middle name."

W.D.

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GOING PLACES

I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move

R. L. STEVENSON, *Travels With a Donkey*

Our coach was full, but we dropt two at Oxford, and to my great delight we left the other filthy wretch at Birmingham at 6 in the morning. He had been eating *prawns* all night, and flinging the skins at the bottom of the coach.

THOMAS CREEVEY, *in a letter*, 1828

All Aboard

The lowering sooty London sky
Flushes with roses manifold ;
The spattered feet of the passers-by
Slip and slide in silver and gold.

Lilac and violet and blue
The lines of chimney-pots and bricks ;
The omnibus with its spectre crew
Fades like the purple barque of Styx.

JOHN BOWYER NICHOLS, *Pastel*

Taxi !

That Miss Frome raised no objection to my seeing her home was something to be thankful for ; and as the taxi moved off at some speed I knew that I hadn't a minute to lose. Yet all the way from the Strand to Baker Street I remained inactive, merely thrilling at the glimpses I had of my companion's face each time we passed a street lamp.

" You don't mind if I kiss you, do you ? " I wanted to say to her with a melting smile. But I knew that that would get me nowhere. And at last I made up my mind to commit myself ; to risk the whole thing turning into a wrestling match, with Miss Frome and myself entwined like snakes on the floor of the cab.

As I saw it, the thing to do was to put one arm round her waist,

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lasso her neck with the other, then plunge my face into hers—avoiding if possible our noses getting in the way. In a second it would be over. I would know if I had made a fool of myself, or done what was expected of me. Either Miss Frome would cling to me like an adorable leech, or in anger thrust me off.

As it happened, she did neither of these things. Remaining limply in my grasp, she allowed herself to be devoured by my kisses. Yet for all the response she made, I might as well have been devouring a bar of chocolate. And I hardly knew what to think when, as I drew back for a second to look at her, she said:

"This won't do at all."

SEWELL STOKES, *Rarely Pure*

Who's for the Ferry?

"Ahoy! and Oho! and it's who's for the ferry?"
(The briar's in bud and the sun going down:)
"And I'll row ye so quick and I'll row ye so steady,
And 'tis but a penny to Twickenham Town."

THEOPHILE MARZIALS

Cab, Sir?

"Cab!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Here you are, sir," shouted a strange specimen of the human race.

"How old is that horse, my friend?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Forty-two," replied the driver, eyeing him askant.

"What!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, laying his hand upon his note-book. The driver reiterated his former statement. Mr. Pickwick looked very hard at the man's face, but his features were immovable, so he noted down the fact forthwith.

"He lives at Pentonwil when he's at home," observed the driver, coolly, "but we seldom takes him home, on account of his veakness."

"On account of his weakness!" reiterated the perplexed Mr. Pickwick.

"He always falls down when he's took out o' the cab," continued the driver, "but when he's in it, we bears him up werry tight, and takes him in werry short, so as he can't werry well fall down; and we've got a pair o' precious large wheels on, so ven he *does* move, they run after him, and he must go on—he can't help it."

CHARLES DICKENS, *The Pickwick Papers*

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Mind the Doors!

I had my first experience of Hades today, and if the real thing is to be like that I shall never again do anything wrong. I got into the Underground railway at Baker Street after leaving Archibald Forbes' house. I wanted to go to Moorgate Street in the City. It was very warm—for London, at least. The compartment in which I sat was filled with passengers who were smoking pipes, as is the British habit, and as the smoke and sulphur from the engine fill the tunnel, all the windows have to be closed. The atmosphere was a mixture of sulphur, coal dust and foul fumes from the oil lamp above; so that by the time we reached Moorgate Street I was nearly dead of asphyxiation and heat. I should think these Underground railways must soon be discontinued, for they are a menace to health. A few minutes earlier can be no consideration, since hansom cabs and omnibuses, carried by the swiftest horses, do the work most satisfactorily.

R. D. BLUMENFELD, *Diary, 23rd June*, 1887

Free Wheeling

With lifted feet, hands still,
I am poised, and down the hill
Dart, with heedful mind;
The air goes by in a wind.

Swifter and yet more swift,
Till the heart with a mighty lift
Makes the lungs laugh, the throat cry :—
"O bird, see; see, bird, I fly!"

HENRY CHARLES BEECHING, *Going down Hill on a Bicycle*

Per Passenger Train

Lord Frederic Hamilton records a story of the Indian Census of 1891, when a man gave his place of birth as "a first-class carriage on the London and North-Western Railway, somewhere between Bletchley and Euston; the precise spot being unnoticed either by myself or the other person principally concerned."

STUART LEGG, *The Railway Book*

Pedestrian's Prayer

Domine, defende nos
Contra hos Motores Bos!

A. D. GODLEY

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DARK HORSES

"Wilkie," she said suddenly, "are you bothered with a conscience?"

by WILLIAM FRYER HARVEY

"THE young and inexperienced nurse," our matron would say, "has much to learn."

A platitude, of course, but it would be a mistake to judge Miss Carruthers by this text of one of the Sunday evening talks which she gave all too rarely to the staff of St. Crispinian's. She explained with a touch of the acid humour which endeared her to the discerning that she was quoting from a sermon delivered by her father the Bishop.

"I disliked it at the time," she said, "but it contains a valuable truth, applicable, you may note, to curates as well as nurses." She went on to explain that by the time a girl is entitled to call herself a nurse she is only relatively young, and as for inexperience, she has probably seen more of life and death than most bishops. Then, having put her father in his place, she proceeded to say many wise things.

I wish now that I had taken notes of those talks, but of the one on the inexperience of nurses I remember two things.

She said that when we went out to private cases we were too apt to imagine that we should be welcomed with open arms. As likely as not the first thought that came into the minds of those who employed us would be: "Can we really afford a nurse, and how long will she have to stay?" The second would be a haunting fear that we should upset the whole of the domestic staff and create yet more work in the house.

"A very natural and proper fear," Miss Carruthers would say. "Good cooks are as hard to find, and far harder to keep than good nurses, and a cold rice pudding is even worse than a cold linseed poultice."

That was the first point. The second was that the patient would often be unwilling to receive our services. The presence of a nurse assured him of the fact that he was ill, and that he had to do what he was told.

"Get rid," she said, "of the idea of the ministering angel. I have been told myself by a responsible churchwarden with sciatica

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that I was an interfering devil. You will find that a certain proportion of your patients hold that opinion. Your duty is to see that they are not right, to carry on and to maintain the high tradition that invariably accompanies a low salary."

I remembered that Sunday evening talk of Miss Carruthers when I went to Kiddington Parva as a night nurse to old Mr. Weston. It was not that the family didn't welcome me with open arms: they could not have been kinder, and the staff, an old woman and a half-witted boy, would have been upset by nothing short of an earthquake. My quarrel was with Mr. Weston, or, to put it more accurately, Mr. Weston's quarrel was with me.

I had been met at Newbury by a jolly-looking girl who introduced herself as Agatha Weston. In a workmanlike way she strapped my box on to the luggage-carrier of a disreputable-looking car into which a number of bulky packages had already been stowed.

Then, lifting a protesting bull-terrier by the scruff of his neck, from the front seat, she handed me a rug. "You'll need it before we get there," she said, "and don't be alarmed if we backfire. The car is one of the family, you know. We've all seen happier days, and we can't help making a noise about it. It's lucky for us that we were able to get you, for at the moment we are in rather a hole.

"To begin with there is my uncle, your patient. He has had pleurisy and his heart is pretty dicky, and to make matters worse he hates being looked after. Happily my sister Meg is a trained nurse. She was at home when he was taken ill, recuperating after an attack of quinsy. You'll like Meg. She is a thorough sportswoman, but of course it's been a bit of a strain on her, more than she can manage single-handed. Then father's down with his usual winter cough, and I've got my hands full in looking after the farm. Mother is more or less of an invalid, and in any case she doesn't hit it off too well with my uncle."

I enjoyed my ride with Agatha Weston on that bright March morning. We came all too soon to Kiddington Parva, a long straggling village. I told her that it reminded me of a place I knew in Lincolnshire.

"Lincolnshire?" she said. "Good lord! I wonder if that is an omen."

"Why, what are you thinking of?" I asked.

"Oh, you wouldn't understand; some day perhaps I'll tell you, if our luck holds. And I'm inclined to think it will."

The Manor House stood some little way back from the road. It was a big rambling house with no pretensions to style; at the back was a long range of farm buildings and stables.

"We'll leave the things in the car," said Agatha; "the boy

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will fetch them in later. Let's find mother and she'll show you your room. It's all very rough and ready here, but we're a good-natured crowd. We can't afford not to be."

Mrs. Weston was a frail, anxious-looking woman of sixty, with what most people would call a sweet smile. Women with sweet smiles are, in my experience, usually selfish—the something for nothing type—but Mrs. Weston was to prove an exception. My bedroom was at the end of the east wing. She had chosen it, she explained, because it was the quietest in the house.

"You'll be able to sleep here undisturbed in the daytime," she said. "It's not a room that we often use, but the bed has been well aired. We shall be having lunch in a quarter of an hour."

It was a charming room. From the window I looked out over lichen-covered roofs on to the downs, across which the shadows raced. The midday sun caught a bowl of polyanthus that Mrs. Weston had placed on the old-fashioned dressing-table. The flowered wall-paper was stained and faded, but it seemed just right for that quiet room with its faint aroma of apples.

At lunch I met Meg Weston.

From the first she struck me as a remarkable woman. She must have been a good ten years older than her sister; her features were more strongly marked, but she had the same attractive smile.

When nurses who work in double harness meet each other for the first time they display, from reasons of self-interest, a more than usual amount of tact. Each knows that the other will criticize her methods, and, since patients unfortunately are rarely speechless, that comparisons, more or less invidious, are almost certain to be made. Nurses, too, have an unreasonable loyalty to their own hospitals. They will champion a second-rate surgeon just because he happens to be on the staff, uniting only in their denunciation of matrons, prunes, and rice pudding, and the complete lack of imagination displayed by mere men who sit on management committees and think of them as fledgling Nightingales.

I liked Meg Weston from the first. She was obviously a thoroughly capable woman, who not only looked after her patient but seemed to be the one who ran the house as well.

As soon as the meal was over she took me off to her room, installed me in the most comfortable chair, and offered me a cigarette.

"We've time for a ten minutes' talk," she said, "before I go back to my uncle. I left him dozing. He's a difficult patient, and crotchety, but at present he's too ill to give much trouble, though sparks may begin to fly when he is on the mend. He has a left-sided pleurisy and his heart is none too strong. Dr. Corrigan saw him this morning and thought him rather better. Not that I attach much weight to what he says. Horses are his first and last love,

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and broken collar-bones his speciality. My poor old dad is ill too, but he knows how to look after himself, and has the patience of Job."

She went on to discuss arrangements. She proposed that I should get what sleep I could before coming on duty at eight. Supper would be at seven, and after that she would introduce me to Mr. Weston and see that I had everything I wanted for the night.

"Just one word about the servants," she added. "There aren't any. No, don't be alarmed. I don't mean it literally, but they are not what you are accustomed to and they are not presentable. Mrs. Worboys is an excellent cook who'll give you anything you want, but she has a cleft palate which makes conversation difficult. Her boy is a little wrong in the head-piece, and though he can turn out a room far better than most housemaids, he has to whistle while he does it and doesn't know what it is to walk quietly. So we've made it a rule that he keeps downstairs. My mother and sister look after the upper rooms. And if you see any bells, don't ring them because the wires are all broken."

My previous case had been a hard one, and on coming back I had been put on night duty in one of the surgical wards, so I was glad enough to get a few hours' sleep.

The room was certainly wonderfully peaceful. There was no clanking of trams, no clattering of lorries, only the monotonous cawing of rooks in the elms and the cheerful droning of a bee that had been on night duty all winter and was now rejoicing in the March sunshine. When I fell asleep I had no fault to find with Kiddington Parva.

A hot bath at half-past six, supper at seven in the dining-room—for the first time I noticed that nearly all the pictures on the walls seemed to be sporting prints—and then came my introduction to Mr. Weston.

His room, I found, was next door but one to mine, a big room with a four-poster bed. It was the first time I had ever nursed anyone in a four-poster. I hope it will be the last.

"Here's Nurse Wilkie, uncle," said Meg Weston. "You remember I told you yesterday that Dr. Corrigan thought it would be a good thing to have some additional help for a few days. You get more difficult to manage, you know, as you get stronger, and you are apt to think that you are entitled to get your own way with your niece."

The man in the bed glared at me. He looked about sixty; he had a black, pointed beard and thick eyebrows. I could imagine him as a captain on a quarterdeck, or wherever it is that captains

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are to be found, raising Cain to scare some inoffensive Abel out of his wits.

"Good evening, nurse," he said. "I don't know why you should have come. All I want is someone to give me my medicine, not that any stuff of Corrigan's will do me any good; all he does is to strap me up like a portmanteau."

"Now, uncle," said Meg, "you must not talk or you will start coughing. You are going to have a good night, and when I see you again in the morning, you will be much better."

He closed his eyes wearily, and she beckoned me behind a screen.

"I think there's everything here that you will require, nurse," she said. "I've taken his temperature. Dr. Corrigan wanted him to have a sleeping-draught at nine—it's on the table. He likes a good fire kept up. There are two kettles, one for hot-water bottles, and the other for your tea. I apologize for the reading lamp: I've seen that it's filled with oil, and if you want candles by any chance, you will find a supply in the cupboard. That's all, I think. You know my room and don't hesitate to call me. But I think we shall all have good nights. I know I want one."

At nine o'clock I gave Mr. Weston his sleeping-draught. Apart from an occasional dry cough he seemed comfortable. His pulse, when I felt it, was rather rapid, but his colour was good, and when I looked at the chart I saw that his temperature had fallen since midday.

The night passed uneventfully. The fire burned cheerfully and I had provided myself with an interesting book. There were mice busy behind the skirting-boards, there were owls that called perpetually to each other, boards in the old house creaked, and the other Mr. Weston, Meg's father, whose room must have been at the opposite end of the house from the one in which I was, had certainly a most distressing cough. A soft rain began to fall about dawn when the birds broke into song.

It was extraordinarily peaceful.

And then Mr. Weston woke up and peace vanished. He had slept badly, he said, if he had slept at all. The room was too hot, there were far too many clothes on the bed, the pain in his side was worse. Mr. Weston was as cantankerous as he could be; it was obvious that he was better, and there could be no doubt that he thoroughly enjoyed his breakfast. I was quite ready for my own.

Mrs. Weston, Meg, and Agatha were taking part in an animated discussion when I entered the dining-room. There are different ways of punctuating a conversation. My role on this occasion was that, not of the comma or semi-colon, but of the full stop, followed by a new paragraph. But the new paragraph proceeded jerkily. Something was very much on the minds of the Weston family.

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Meg looked if anything more tired for her night in bed, Agatha was on edge, her mother still smiled sweetly, though it was an obvious effort for her to stir the sugar.

She asked after my patient, but she did not seem to be particularly interested in my reply. Then she suddenly changed the conversation to the beauties of the countryside and the stimulating quality of the downland air.

This seemed to give the cue to Meg. Agatha, it appeared, had to interview a farmer some miles away about a bunch of heifers—it was the first time that I had ever heard of a bunch of heifers—and there would be room for me in the car if I cared to go. It looked as if my morning had been planned for me. The rain had ceased. In the ordinary course of things I should have gone for a solitary walk along muddy lanes. I preferred Agatha's company, and for the car to collect the mud.

We called first at Dr. Corrigan's house in a village some miles away to return an electric torch which he had left behind when he had looked in on Mr. Weston in the late afternoon of the previous day. Agatha seemed to have a good deal to say to him, and when she came out the doctor accompanied her to the gate. He was a good-looking young fellow, who seemed thoroughly pleased with himself, the world, and Agatha.

She introduced me.

"Glad you were able to come, nurse," he said. "I think we shall be able to pull the old gentleman through all right, but Miss Weston badly wanted someone to relieve her. It's been a bit of a strain. He had a good night? Well, that's splendid. I shall be looking in this morning. The very best of luck, Agatha; you won't have long to wait now."

"A phlegmatic disposition," said Agatha, as she waved good-bye, "must be a gift above rubies. I haven't got it. We are all rather on edge this morning, as I expect you've noticed. Now if only you and I could get away for a few days, run down to the sea, go anywhere, do anything. I'm fed up to the teeth with Kiddington Parva."

I looked at her more closely. What was the matter with Agatha Weston? Then as suddenly her mood changed. The sun came out and she was the same girl who had driven me from the station on the previous day.

We found our farm, and after a leisurely inspection of some disagreeable-looking heifers, Agatha suddenly discovered that she had nothing to do for the rest of the morning and that I might as well see as much of the country as I could. By the time we got back to Kiddington Parva we must have covered nearly fifty miles.

It did not take me long to go to sleep that afternoon. There

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were certain things about the Westons that I did not understand. They combined in a strange degree frankness with secretiveness, but, after all, one of the functions of a family is to act as a ring fence. It was no business of mine to peer through the palings. I slept the sleep of the uninquisitive.

But when I met the Westons before going on duty I could not help asking myself what had happened to them in the course of the afternoon. They hardly seemed the same people. Mrs. Weston looked as if she had been happily weeping. Meg was laughing, and Agatha's eyes were dancing with suppressed excitement.

I hoped that the curmudgeonly old gentleman in bed upstairs would show a different side to his nature as well. But I was to be disappointed.

Mr. Weston was obviously better than on the preceding night, his pulse slower; his temperature, which at four o'clock had been a hundred, was now normal.

His temper, however, was worse. Nothing that I could do for him was right. He complained of pain. He refused to lie still, and seemed quite determined to keep awake. At twelve o'clock, at one, he was still glaring at me malevolently. His remarks had become more and more personal. From criticism of my nurse's uniform he passed by stages to complaints about what he called my heavy tread.

In vain I tried to live up to all those excellent copybook maxims which deal with the theme that a nurse's first and last care should be the welfare of her patient. "Feed the brute" was not one of them, and if it had been, the brute would have been certain to disagree with his food. At last Mr. Weston fell asleep. He slept soundly for five hours, woke up with a start, and almost at once gave vent to a stream of invective. I listened in silence, which only seemed to infuriate him the more. At last my patience was exhausted.

"Mr. Weston," I said, "I know you are ill, but I have done my very best for you. You are behaving exactly as if you wanted to get rid of me."

"Your perspicacity, nurse," he replied, "is wonderful. That is exactly what I wish to do. I never asked for your help, I have no intention of paying for it. My niece was, and is, perfectly capable of looking after me. As far as I am concerned, the sooner you go the better."

So that was that.

As soon as I came off duty, I asked to see Mrs. Weston and her eldest daughter. I told them what had happened and what Mr. Weston had said, adding that his animosity was so strong that it seemed obvious that I was doing him more harm than good. They

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listened to me in silence. Then Meg got up from her seat and put her hand on my shoulder.

"It's perfectly abominable," she said, "and I know just what you are feeling. It's no use apologizing for uncle. He has always been a mannerless autocrat. It isn't fair to ask you to go on, but it would be still more unfair to you if you went back to St. Crispinian's before your week was up."

"Couldn't nurse stay on here as our guest?" said Mrs. Weston. "I am sure we would all try to give her as good a time as possible."

"I don't see how I could do that," I answered, "though it's awfully kind of you to suggest it. Why shouldn't I nurse the other Mr. Weston? Would that be any help?"

They were silent for a moment.

"Father is really much better," said Meg. "Indeed I think he ought to be downstairs tomorrow. But you have given me an idea. Why shouldn't Agatha and Nurse Wilkie go off for the rest of the week together? She has been doing far too much and I've wondered the last few days if she isn't on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Yes, that is an excellent idea. I'll get her to run me over to Dr. Corrigan's and explain matters to him. All it means is that you go from one patient to another, and an altogether nicer one.

"You needn't say anything to the hospital authorities about it. It's really none of their concern. They will get their cheque all right—in any case uncle wasn't going to pay it—Dr. Corrigan will sign the chit saying that you have given complete satisfaction, as indeed you have, and you will have four or five delightful days with Agatha to make up for uncle's abominable conduct."

The plan certainly had much to commend it from my point of view. True, it would involve me in a little innocent dissimulation with the hospital authorities, but my conscience is not queasy, and I very much disliked the idea of being returned to store after failure to give satisfaction. I don't think it is to be wondered at that I agreed.

The Westons were a queer family but their womenfolk undoubtedly knew how to make decisions, and to act on them promptly. By half-past eleven Agatha and I were once again in her battered car. The tank was full of petrol, England lay before us, and Kiddington Parva was only a name on a map.

The days that followed were some of the happiest I have ever spent. We had no plan and no time-table. If we saw an attractive turning we took it. Berkshire, Wiltshire, Hampshire, were full of attractive turnings. Every evening Agatha reported her whereabouts by telegram—a rather extravagant procedure, I thought—and twice on the following morning she got telegrams in reply.

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On the morning of our last day together we ate our sandwiches in a clearing in the New Forest. Agatha lay stretched on the heather, smoking a cigarette.

"Well, Wilkie," she said, "we've had a perfectly gorgeous time. I hate to think of going back tomorrow. But there's one thing I should like to ask you. You must be perfectly honest, and don't answer in a hurry. Are you bothered with a conscience?"

I couldn't help but burst out laughing.

"I know it sounds absurd," she went on. "What I meant to say is, can you condone or compound, or whatever it's called, a felony?"

"Certainly not," I replied.

"I believe," said Agatha, "that you could, if it was only a little felony, and you liked the people who had committed it. Come, Wilkie, I'm sure you could if you tried. In fact, you have got to, because otherwise I shall have it on my conscience. Well, I'm going to trust you, and unless I'm greatly mistaken, you will forgive me.

"To begin with, Wilkie, I can't congratulate you on your powers of observation. You spent two days in and around Kiddington Parva and you made no remark about the racing stables only a quarter of a mile from our house, which you passed at least four times. You have had an opportunity of seeing the newspaper every day and yet you are in entire ignorance of the fact that the Lincolnshire Handicap was run on the day after you arrived, and that the winner was Backfire by Brooklands out of Carburettor. Don't you ever have sweeps at St. Crispinian's?"

"Only when the chimneys smoke. We, unfortunately, are not allowed to."

"Wilkie, you are extraordinarily innocent. It will be news to you that Backfire was a rank outsider, but we are coming nearer to the heart of the mystery when I tell you that that really noble horse is owned by Mr. Algernon Weston of Kiddington Parva, and trained at Kiddington by Perriman. Is any vestige of light beginning to dawn? I don't expect you to have heard of Perriman; he hasn't made any name for himself as yet."

"Not a glimmering," I replied with complete truth. "Who is Algernon Weston? Was he my patient?"

"Now we are coming to the part where you condone the felony, or what might have been one. Algernon Weston is my uncle. You never saw him. He was frightfully ill, pleurisy and a dicky heart. Meg was nursing him night and day. No wonder she was nearly worn out."

"But I thought my patient was your uncle?"

"That is what we wanted you to think, but as a matter of fact he was my father, and anything but a curmudgeon. He was acting

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a part; he hated doing it—in fact he never would have done it if Uncle Algernon had not insisted. It's like this. We are an impoverished family, land mortgaged up to the hilt, but we all of us, mother and Meg included, know a good horse when we see one. Backfire—uncle bought him as a two-year-old for eighty guineas—was a bit of a disappointment at first and seemed to share in the family's bad luck. But we never lost faith and Perriman has worked wonders with him.

"When I was at Sunday school I learnt all about faith without works being dead. We all of us put pretty well our last penny on Backfire, and if you read your papers you would see what the odds were. Then suddenly uncle became seriously ill. If he died before the race was run, Backfire would be a non-starter. There's neither sense nor equity in a rule like that, and I can't think why someone hasn't introduced a bill in Parliament to do away with such silliness.

"Well, poor old uncle, who is a sportsman if there ever was one, got worse and worse. It looked as if there would be quite a chance that he would never hear the result of the Lincolnshire. Then we came to the conclusion that if he died within twenty-four hours of the race being run it would be quite possible to fix things up. My father, who was himself a bit seedy, would pose as the patient, Meg would strap him up, make out one of those temperature charts that look like the foot-hills of the Himalayas and give him something that would temporarily affect the action of his heart. Meg is a very capable nurse. Then we would get in a nurse from outside.

"Unfortunately she had to be on night duty because she couldn't meet the doctor when he called to see his patient without giving the show away.

"If things had gone badly, this is how it would have worked out. Supposing uncle had died in the night following your arrival. I should have run you round in the car to Dr. Corrigan's in the morning and introduced you. You would have reported the fact that your patient was comfortable and was going on well. Then we should have had to find some excuse for Dr. Corrigan to postpone his visit to the late afternoon or evening.

"Some hours after the race had been run, Meg would send round a note announcing the fact that he had had a sudden relapse and had died. Dr. Corrigan is a fairly busy man. He knew that there were two trained nurses in the house and would not be at all likely to hurry over to see a corpse. We should have found some reason for getting you out of bed, say at three o'clock, after the race was over, to see my father, who of course would be alive and well. And if ever any questions were raised, your testimony would be all-important. Then—and I am awfully sorry about this, Wilkie, but it couldn't be helped—we should have had to get rid of you.

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Father would have to manage that somehow, in the way that you know. We should have packed you off next morning and all would have been well.

" Of course I admit it was a sort of conspiracy. It sounds cold-blooded, but you know the younger generation *is* cold-blooded, and Uncle Algernon would have hated to think that he had let us down. As it was our faith was justified—our old Sunday school teacher always said it would be if we had enough. Uncle rallied on the morning of the race, Backfire won by two lengths, and the good news acted like a tonic. But we had to get you out of the house as quickly as possible.

" There was always a chance of your discovering that you had got hold of the wrong patient, father had had more than enough of bed and he would not have been able to deceive you much longer. His appetite is enormous and he is very dependent on his glass of toddy last thing at night.

" Uncle Algernon is now well on the way to recovery, and what is more—I mean, what is almost as good—by backing Peckover in the Grand National he has brought off the double. My fancy was Locum Tenens, who came down at the first fence. But isn't it a wonderful world ? There we are, a devoted family, no longer impoverished. We haven't committed or compounded any felony. Mother will be able to go on a spring cruise to the Mediterranean and take on all sorts of people's troubles. Meg will probably start a nursing home and I—"

" You, Agatha," I said, " will put your money not on Locum Tenens but Irish Doctor. I sincerely hope that Dr. Corrigan won't come down at the first fence."

Agatha actually blushed.

" Wilkie," she exclaimed, " I withdraw all that I said about your not being observant. I think you would make an excellent nurse for heart cases.

" You may like to know, too, that my father was most impressed by your capabilities. He told mother that he should insist on having you whenever he was seriously ill. She was quite annoyed about it. Tell me you forgive us all and wish us well."

" I don't think the question of forgiveness comes in. You are quite the most extraordinary family I have ever met and your powers of persuasion are a danger to the community. But tell me, Agatha, was Dr. Corrigan aware of what was going on ? "

" I don't know. I thought it better not to ask. I think you could describe him as an innocent party. I shall probably tell him some day. He is rather sentimental, and I do like men to be realists."

"Agatha, you are a wonderful girl. I wonder where you received your education ? "

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"At home and at Sunday school," she said with a smile, "and I still occasionally lend a hand with the infants. It seems to me it's important not so much that they should know all about Moses in the bulrushes, but that they should learn to be good sports. That is what I try to teach them—the sporting instinct—although teaching isn't really my line of country, you know." I felt perfectly convinced that Agatha Weston was right.

* * *

FOR ART'S SAKE?

One of the dear friends of Duveen, the celebrated art-dealer, was Lady Lavery, the second wife of the painter Sir John Lavery. She asked one day if she might bring a certain Californian industrialist to see him. Duveen, who never denied anything to a friend, gave her permission, even though he considered the industrialist another of the small fry. Lady Lavery came a little ahead of time and was sitting in Duveen's office when the Californian was announced by an usher.

"Keep him waiting half an hour," said Duveen. Lady Lavery protested. "You can't do that to a man of his importance," she said.

"Leave it to me and watch," said Duveen.

When the visitor was finally admitted, Duveen took him and Lady Lavery round his gallery. He showed them a Rembrandt. The industrialist wanted to buy it.

"The price is a hundred thousand dollars," Duveen said.

"That's all right," said Lady Lavery's friend. Duveen made a few inquiries. "What other pictures do you own?" he asked finally. The Californian admitted he had none of any importance.

"I can't possibly sell a Rembrandt to a man who owns no other pictures," said Duveen. "The Rembrandt would be lonely."

He persuaded the ardent customer that for him to take the picture home would constitute a kind of cruelty to Rembrandts. The industrialist saw that he would have to make a more modest start, and here Duveen was able to help him. Duveen sold him a relatively inexpensive picture.

Within a few years the Californian had enough minor Duveens to feel justified in asking for a major one. Duveen shipped the Rembrandt to California with a nice feeling that he had provided for its social life.

S. N. BEHRMAN, *Duveen*

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THE BROKEN LYRE

"Me an' you, Mick," she whispered, "an' the world ag'in us!"

by BRYAN MacMAHON

THE dark-faced melodeon-player, his instrument slung from a strap over his left shoulder, hurried through the town where the cattle fair had long since ended. Stravaging behind him came his red-haired wife, recurrently freeing her forearms from the irk of her red-green tartan shawl and shrieking coarse insults at her husband in the savage hope that he would turn and strike her. Farmers standing at pub doors after their drinks watched the pair with open amusement written on their faces.

The musician turned the corner leading into the Market Square. As, momentarily, he was out of his wife's sight he moved swiftly in the direction of the caravans and carts that were halted beside a small church in mid-square, the walls of which were aflame with the brilliance of Virginia creeper. The woman turned the corner; then, her anger further whetted by the trick her husband had played on her, she gave utterance to a cry of animal anger and ran full pelt after him. Sensing her approach the melodeon-player veered away from the caravans and strode swiftly towards the door of a public-house. His manhood would not allow him to run; thus it was that the panting woman readily caught up with him. Grasping his jacket by the shoulder, she swung him round. The man raised his right arm to strike his wife, but, thinking better of it, allowed the arm to droop wearily by his side.

"Say it ag'in!" the woman screamed.

"Go 'way from me!" the husband said darkly, yet with a certain measure of control.

Dancing with anger, the woman shrieked again: "Call it to me now, where there's witnesses to hear it!"

The musician solemnly raised his head. In each wicked eye a small ember blazed. "If you don't go 'way, I'll swing for you!" he said quietly but with full venom.

As he turned away, the woman, still screaming incoherently, snatched at him. He dragged himself away from her, leaving in her grasp a rag of his jacket for hostage. Again she sprang before him.

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Panting, the pair eyed one another. The twin crescents of white in the melodeon-player's eyes indicated that he was secretly watching the watching farmers.

As his wife readied her talons to claw his face, the musician said desperately: "If you don't let me be, I swear to you in God that I'll kick the gadget!"

"I dar' you!" the woman screamed. Then, her talons ready, her hair mad, and her shawl trailing unheeded in the dirt, she rushed at him. He dodged accurately as she sped by him on high-heeled shoes that were relics of cast-off finery.

When he had made an angle from which she could not readily renew her attack, he deftly grasped his swinging melodeon, flicked off the clasps, and as its bright red bellows were discovered in the shafting sunlight, he let the instrument fall from him to the ground. He then drove his heavy shoe fairly through the raucous chord of protest to which the instrument was giving vent. Again and again his boot lashed out savagely. The third kick broke through the last ragged shred of bellows and reduced the instrument to two disparate dead black boards to each of which the tattered rags of corrugated cardboard were still attached.

The onlookers were silent. With everything of the earth in their stolidity they continued to watch.

The woman's new-toned scream came from one who sees children, home, fire, and food being destroyed before her very eyes. As the scream wheeled downwards to lamentation, the woman began ceremoniously to draw her talons through the tangles of her red hair. She tossed her head, extended her rigid hands and allowed her nostrils fully to flare. Stiff and erect she stood above the flung brilliance of her shawl. Stolid and black-dog-like, her husband, with lowered head, continued to watch her—objectively almost it might be said—as if comparing the quality of this rage with that of other rages he had known.

In the midst of her trance the woman shed her rigidity and became astonishingly lissom. When at last she came flying at her husband, he waited for her and struck her full in the face. As she returned to the attack he struck her again and again with that strange accuracy that lies beyond desperation. The woman sobbed, reeled and fell.

An ex-soldier had pushed his way out from the adjoining public-house. He was wearing a soft hat pinched to a crude tricorn; on the back of each of his hands were the muted cobalt patterns of tattooing. With a strange sudden curse he buttoned his jacket and advanced on the melodeon-player.

"Hey, there!" he called out in a tone of tipsy outrage.

"Keep out!" the melodeon-player warned.

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"You savage!" the ex-soldier said, staggering the musician with a direct blow.

Fierce, mauling fighting began. Fist met flesh and rang the bone behind it. The travelling-man had youth on his side but the irregular food of the road had sapped his body's natural strength. That the ex-soldier had learned the elements of boxing was evident from his stance and guard; yet it seemed that advancing age detracted somewhat from his experience. After a few moments of indecisive fighting it became clear that the ex-soldier still possessed sufficient skill to gain victory over a travelling-man whose face was by this time utterly bloodied.

The woman had sunk to the kerb-stone. Her palms kept fondling her bewildered cheeks. For a time she seemed awed by the fire the ember of her anger had lighted. Realizing that her man tottered on the edge of defeat, dullness disappeared from her face. She glanced quickly about her. One of the farmers in the circle of bystanders was loosely holding a strong ash crop between his fingers. Rising and moving with agility the woman snapped the crop out of the farmer's hand. The farmer laughed and let her have the weapon.

Grasping the stick by its lighter end the woman moved cat-like to where the ex-soldier had his back turned to her. Her reeling husband put all he had into one attack designed to fling the ex-soldier within the range of his wife's stick. The ruse was successful; viciously the woman brought the crop down on the ex-soldier's head. The curious crimped hat was sent flying to the cowdung of the streets.

The ex-soldier did not fall. Bareheaded, hair cropped close to its black roots, his eyes still on his enemies, he crouched and drew apart. The crowd dully watched him shake his head free of vertigo. Then, as he feigned terror of a sudden drop into unconsciousness, he shambled for a few steps like a sick ape. When he had interposed the melodeon-player between him and the woman, he rushed with ferocity at the man and with two swift blows knocked him senseless on the roadway.

As the woman closed with him he grasped the stick she held and tried furiously to wrest it from her. The stick broke in their grasp—the ex-soldier tossed the pieces aside and hurtled the swaying woman from him—she keeled over and fell on her rump, to be up again quickly like a clever toy. This time, however, instead of coming at him she stood apart, her eyes fully ablaze. Then she began to cry out for help in the secret language of the Irish roads.

The doors of the caravans under the steeple were torn open and and the square became suddenly peopled with red-headed men

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wearing bright plaid shirts. As they meshed out in a quick arc, the ex-soldier's mouth opened in terror of the semi-known. He dared not stoop to retrieve his hat lest this action should brand him as the musician's assailant.

He tried to back away in the direction of the black asphalt road that raced out of the square and downhill between high demesne walls into the open country of the south. In his agitation he turned; then the blood slow-running from his crown readily identified him as the culprit: if this were insufficient the woman cursing him loudly and pointing frenziedly in his direction was more than enough to make her friends come after him and kill him. The tinkers came running. The farmers continued to remain aloof.

Realizing that his danger was now extreme the ex-soldier took to his heels and ran pell-mell out of the square. The tinkers came lumbering after, crying out with the cry of hounds close on their quarry. Two young tinkers, who were last out of the caravans, laughed suddenly and sprang lithely on to the body of a flat spring-cart. One stood up straight in the vehicle and, using the free loop of the rein as whip, lashed out at the piebald pony where he slumbered beneath the glitter of gee-gawed harness: the other, a thin smile on his lips and a heavy-ended ash-crop in easy equipoise between the thumb and finger of his right hand, vaulted smilingly to the sideboard of the vehicle.

This then was the chase: the bloody-polled ex-soldier in front, the running tinkers lumbering after and the harnessed spring-cart all silver and bells moving swiftly behind.

The ex-soldier gave promise to outdistance his immediate pursuers: the farmers watching from the crest of the height observed his head move downwards through the evening sun that brought the left-hand demesne wall to the full colour of orange. As the spring-cart outdistanced them, the tinkers on foot slowed up.

The ex-soldier, whose recurrent backward glances of terror had been towards those who pursued him on foot, suddenly realized the menace of the approaching vehicle. For a few dazed moments he hesitated—the piebald pony, the flashing harness and the chiaroscuro on the lighted wall seemed to add to his befuddlement. As, with a final fearful glance over his shoulder, he noticed the young standing tinker, his supple body swaying with every movement of the headlong vehicle, and also the seated tinker with the surety of the kill inherent in his indolent poise and the anticipation of the kill implicit in the smile on his cruel lips, the ex-soldier cried out in his agony. The unshod pony drew closer upon him: he glanced in anguish to left and right, seeking in vain to find one small breach in the merciless walls.

Slowly and surely the sitting tinker spat into the palm of the

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hand holding the weapon. His eyes never left his cornered quarry. With rare skill the driver veered to the right, forcing the ex-soldier to keep fully to the left wall or be run down. The ex-soldier then tried a trick of which the pair of young tinkers had foreknowledge: stopping suddenly by the wall he crouched and laced his fingers about his blood-pied poll. Skilfully the driver drew on the reins and brought the vehicle as close to the wall as was necessary for his comrade's purpose.

The seated tinker made no error: he gathered his body to tautness, allowed the weapon to droop over his shoulder and as the spring-cart hammered past, he drove the heavy knob of his weapon fair through the wickerwork of flesh to crunch audibly on the ex-soldier's skull. For a moment or two the crouching position of the ex-soldier seemed unaltered, then what was a desperate taut ball of humanity disintegrated. The broken body keeled and fell ignominiously on its head in the fashion of a poor diver.

The pair of tinkers rode on for a short distance, then glancing behind them the shout of victory died on their lips as they saw the cap-badges of the advancing Guards. Furiously they lashed the pony and rode into the open southlands.

The melodeon-player had picked himself up and escaped in the mêlée. Glancing neither to right nor to left and with the vizor of his cap drawn well down over his injured features, he moved swiftly through the streets. His wife, brazening out her innocence, moved at some little distance behind him. Carefully she followed her husband as he made out of the town by the north road that wound its way into the uplands. The golden evening light was everywhere and the rooks moved overhead in a regiment.

Soon they had reached the warm upper farmlands where long shadows in the stubble bespoke the cumulative majesty of the corn stooks. There was no one on the white road but the man and the woman who followed him. After a while she ventured to call out his name. When he did not indicate that he had heard her, her voice grew more piteous in its appeal. She hastened her steps but her high-heeled shoes broke her gait. At length, drawing almost level with him, she walked with him for a while, keeping the bare half-pace of subjection behind his shoulder.

Walking thus, they reached the parapet of an old limestone bridge: the woman laid her hand on her husband's forearm.

"I'll wash your face, Mick!" she said quietly. She gentled him down by the little boreen that led from the bridge-end to the stream below. He was listless and remote. At her bidding he knelt on the gravel at the stream's edge. She knelt beside him and, as her shawl slipped from her shoulder, she dipped her gown-end

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into the stream and began to pat his damaged face. He allowed her to do so, yet did not break his silence.

When his face was washed, she patted him dry. He remained in the same listless attitude. As he looked down at his empty hands his face showed a tendency to break. At this the woman stroked the track the melodeon-strap had burned on the shoulder of his jacket. Then slowly her lips came apart and her face moved towards his. She brought her teeth tenderly to caress his ear-rim.

"Me an' you, Mick," she whispered, "an' the world ag'in us!"

He nodded comprehendingly.

They remained there kneeling in that small vessel of darkness. In the little stream beside them the pebbles rang faintly. Then, with that brisk exclamation of throwing trouble away that all women use on occasion, the musician's wife stood up.

"Come!" she said.

Slowly he rose. For a moment or two as they stood breast to breast the man and woman were burnished with evening gold.

* * *

PLEDGE OF AFFECTION

At the end of the two years' run of *Lord and Lady Algy*, Eric Lewis, the leading character, suggested that the company should subscribe to give our boss a silver salver engraved with all our signatures. At the presentation Charles Hawtrey made a touching speech, saying that he would treasure the gift all his life. Some months later Lewis happened to go along to Hawtrey's flat and, looking round for the treasured souvenir, failed to find it. Hawtrey came into the room, apologizing for keeping him waiting.

"That's all right, Charles," said Lewis, "I only popped in to see your flat, and—er—by the way, where have you put that silver tray?"

"Silver tray? Which one?" Charles was genuinely puzzled.

"The one the company gave you. You said you would find a good place for it."

"I couldn't have found a better place," said Charles cheerfully. "You'll need a ticket to see it."

"Really," said Lewis. "I would like to be able to tell the others about it."

Hawtrey took a ticket from his wallet and handed it to Lewis. "So you shall. My pawnbroker's a grand chap—you'll find him opposite the main entrance to Victoria Station."

A. E. MATTHEWS, *Matty*

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★*Voyaging in quest of good fiction, ARGOSY discovers unexpected cargo. Here is a true story—naïve, touching in its simplicity—the adventures of two comrades in peace and war. The author, a tall military figure, now no longer on duty at Buckingham Palace or the Houses of Parliament, finds himself in different uniform on the door of our publishing house. Surroundings have changed, but his story—the first he has ever written—lovingly remembers an unchanging friendship.*

JOURNEY FOR PETER

by MAURICE REGAN

ALTHOUGH we were eventually to be very good pals, Peter and I, at first I had my doubts because of his temper. He was so ungrateful at times; in anger he would disobey me, and if that was not sufficient, he used to ignore me. When not feeling cross, he was very lovable. Perhaps that is why I was so patient with him. Was it his lovely grey eyes and dark skin which attracted me? Maybe it was his size. Such a fine fellow for his four years.

It was my privilege to be his guardian and we became firm friends as the years passed. I loved him as my very own, and it was only natural for me to feel proud of him, as I was responsible for his appearance. I used to take him to school; I could not leave him out of my sight for too long. Maybe I was selfish, but I adored my Peter.

Each night when I put him to bed I would stroke his hair and talk to him. He loved me to do this. He would close his eyes until I took my hand away, thinking he slept, and then his lovely grey eyes would open again. Only when I heard his gentle snore did I leave his bedside and quietly switch off the light.

I feel I must record the time he kicked the barber who tried to cut his hair. I had to cut it myself in the end, not very successfully. And on the occasion when I had to take him to the dentist, poor Peter was terrified! It took an assistant and myself to keep his mouth open until the affected tooth was drawn. It was nearly a week before he was his old self after this episode. When he was better, we went for long walks in Hyde Park. He loved to dig his shoes into the sand of Rotten Row.

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On the day he left school, the master sent for me and predicted a great future for him because he was a brilliant pupil.

I remember the first time I took Peter to see the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace. He was so excited he would not stand still for a moment, and to my regret I had to chastise him. But it was no good. The occasion was too much for him.

I was so worried that I decided to send him to a finishing school where he would be taught how to conduct himself on special occasions.

After this he behaved much better, but once more it took him some time to gain confidence in me, so one day I decided to test him again by taking him to see the King and Queen, this time at the Opening of Parliament. Peter thoroughly enjoyed this show and behaved like a little gentleman. I was more than pleased and showed it by patting his head on our way home, and saying " Well done, my boy."

After this we went to many social events together, more than I have room to tell. The most memorable one was the Coronation of our dear King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on May 12th, 1937. Memories fill my head now as I write : our sadness at the funeral of King George V at Windsor, our joy at seeing the two little Princesses on many occasions, the delight we both took in the Lord Mayor's Show.

And then came the war. My job was to take me abroad, and it was decided that Peter should come with me. After many hurried arrangements we found ourselves on board the *Empress of India* and sailed from Southampton on a night of mist and rain. The journey across the English Channel to Cherbourg was short, but not uneventful, for Peter was quite upset, it being his first sea voyage.

I am not a good sailor myself at the best of times, but I had to be on this occasion for my charge needed all my care and attention. Poor Peter ! What with the vibration of the ship's engines and the rolling of the sea, he was simply scared to death. I just could not get him to lie down and rest, so I stayed by his side with my arm round him, and told him tales which, I now recall, were utter nonsense. My voice could always soothe him.

As it was wartime all lights were forbidden. Although I could not see Peter, I could feel his young, warm body next to mine. He soon became feverish. In a panic, I went in search of the ship's doctor. Unfortunately I woke two other people before I found the right person.

The doctor had hardly opened his eyes before I exclaimed : " Please come quickly—I think Peter has a fever."

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" I will be along in five minutes," he answered.

I hurried back to Peter. I had already left him alone for fifteen minutes. His large frightened eyes told me I had done the right thing in calling the doctor, for he was crying. I had never seen him cry before. I tried to soothe him once again but he would not even let me stroke his hair.

The doctor's five minutes were now twenty-five. Had he gone back to sleep ? I ran back again to find him and in the dark gangway collided with him.

" I'm so sorry ! Please hurry ! " I said.

" Stay outside until I call you," he ordered.

So once again out into the cold morning air I went, and took a stroll around the dark deck. I fumbled for a cigarette, and struck a match.

" Put out that light, you fool ! Do you want us all killed ? Don't you know that there is a black-out ? " the harsh voice came from somewhere in the darkness. What with the restrictions and Peter's troubles, this is a nice journey, I thought.

Suddenly I heard footsteps behind me. It was the doctor.

" He is O.K. now, he was just plain scared," the doctor said to me. " All will be well when he sees a bit of daylight." This was a great relief to me and with a " Thank you, Sir " I made my way back to Peter.

We disembarked at 8 a.m., Peter with my very thick coat over him so as not to catch cold on that bitter French morning. It was drizzling with rain as we staggered down the gangplank and off the quayside to the railway station to enquire about our train to Marseilles.

I left Peter in charge of a porter whilst I went to the information desk. Having received my orders I returned to find Peter causing a commotion, screaming and shouting at the man who was trying to hold him.

" It's a pity I can't leave you for a few minutes without you causing trouble." I said to him. I put this down to his nervous state, and that he could not understand being spoken to in French by the kind porter. Nevertheless I told him he would not always have me to wait on him hand and foot.

When we had breakfasted and brushed down, an excited French railway official put us on our train. We had five other passengers with us. Trixie and George were the two most important to us. Peter took a great liking to Trixie, and they soon became very good friends. They were about the same age. I felt quite happy now he had company, so I settled down comfortably in conversation with George.

After a while I felt very tired and was just dozing off, when I

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saw Peter kiss Trixie. He saw me looking at him and nodded as though to say, " She's nice isn't she ? "

I must have been asleep a few hours, when I was awakened by the train jolting to a stop. I looked at Peter ; he was fast asleep, with his head on Trixie's shoulder.

The guard of the train walked along the platform announcing, in a loud voice, that we were to halt here for two hours. I saw by the station signboard we were at Moulins. Already the greater part of our journey was over, but we still had a long way to go, so Peter and I must seize this chance to get a little exercise before the train moved on.

" Come on Peter, let's go for a walk," I said. He was most reluctant until I added :

" All right, Trixie can come too."

The three of us had a pleasant stroll together. Peter was inclined to show off in front of Trixie, jumping and dancing all over the place. I left them outside a small shop while I bought a loaf and a bottle of wine. Hardly had I made my purchases, when loud shouts sent me running just in time to see the two of them disappearing round the bend of the street.

Shouting for George I raced after them. Luckily some people guessed they were from the train and stopped them before they had gone too far. I caught hold of Peter and boxed his ears.

" You ought to know better," I scolded.

As far as I know the wine and bread are still where I left them.

Without any further trouble we reached Marseilles.

There was a certain amount of speculation in my mind as to where we were finally to go. As I walked to the inquiry office names like Malta, Africa, India flashed through my head.

Peter was firmly locked up while I was away ; his face lit up when I returned.

" Peter, my boy," I said, " we are to go on to Palestine."

The ship in which we were to cross the Mediterranean was called the *Dilwara*. Her appearance was not very pleasant, but she was seaworthy, I was told.

My troubles started again after I had put our luggage on board. First, Peter could not berth near me as space was limited. Then, he refused to go up the gangway at all, and made a terrific scene, kicking and screaming at the thought of being separated from Trixie. So he had to be carried aboard, all his angry protests in vain.

However, I managed to change my cabin so that I was nearer to him. We spent many happy hours together. I am afraid I was rather seasick on this trip ; so was Peter. I was sorrier for him than for myself.

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After seven days we arrived at Haifa in pouring rain. I was told it was the wet season. Awaiting us in a siding was the train which was to take us to our destination.

It took Peter a few weeks to settle down in this new country, but at last all was well—that is, until the hot season started. He could not bear the heat. I kept him in the shade as much as possible, nevertheless it was still too hot for him.

I moved north to Beisan, a cooler district, looking towards the Transjordan Mountains. I thought it would do Peter good, but it was only a matter of weeks before I had to move again. This time it was impossible to take Peter with me. The authorities said that he would be taken care of in my absence.

The night before he went away, I lay wondering if he would be well looked after, and if he would miss me? When would I see him again?

The next morning I made him as smart as possible and took him to the railway station, where I put him safely on the train which was to bear him away.

I kissed him on the cheek and gave him a final hug. He looked ill; they were sad moments for both of us. As the train steamed out my eyes were full of tears. I had a lump in my throat.

"Good-bye, Peter," I called, "and God bless!"

I never saw him again.

Dear Peter must be dead now. It is eleven years since we parted.

Perhaps you have guessed that Peter was my horse. We were in the Household Cavalry together. The day Peter left me my regiment became mechanized.

Was it surprising that my first armoured vehicle was named Peter?

* * *

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across. 6, Platitudinous. 8, Liable. 9, Talented. 10, Sir. 11, Gemini. 12, In detail. 14, Singlet. 16, Stencil. 20, Lilliput. 23, Larvae. 24, Ali. 25, Stagnant. 26, Stolid. 27, Re-incarnation.

Down. 1, Rambling. 2, Fireside. 3, Austria. 4, Billed. 5, Cornet. 6, Prime Minister. 7, Specification. 13, Ere. 15, Lei. 17, Talisman. 18, Narcotic. 19, Stature. 21, Loggia. 22, Plaice.

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AUBADE

I know it was dawn, because there were lark noises in the sky and the grass looked as if it had been left out all night

SAKI, *Reginald*

Hey ! now the day dawis ;
The jolly cock crawis ;
Now shroudis the shawis
Thro' Nature anon.
The thissel-cock cryis
On lovers wha lyis :
Now skaillis the skyis ;
The nicht is neir gone.

The fieldis overflowis
With gowans that growis,
Quhair lilies like low is
As red as the rone.
The turtle that true is,
With notes that renewis,
Her pairty pursuis :
The nicht is neir gone . . .

ALEXANDER MONTGOMERIE, *c.* 1556—*c.* 1610

The Fugitive

Then what happens to the moon ? She, who . . . when dusk has come, rules the sentient night with such chaste and icy spell—whither and how does she retreat ?

I came on her one morning—I surprised her. She was stealing into a dark wintry wood, and five little stars were chasing her. She was orange-hooded, a light-o'-love dismissed—unashamed and unfatigued, having taken all. And she was looking back with her almond eyes, across her dark-ivory shoulder, at Night where he still lay drowned in the sleep she had brought him. What a strange, slow, mocking look !

So might Aphrodite herself have looked back at some weary lover, remembering the fire of his first embrace. Insatiate smiling creature, slipping down to the rim of the world to her bath in the sweet waters of dawn, whence emerging, pure as a water lily, she would float in the cool sky till evening came again ! And just then she saw me looking, and hid behind a holm-oak tree ; but I could still see the gleam of one shoulder and her long narrow eyes

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pursuing me. I went up to the tree and parted its dark boughs to take her; but she had slipped behind another . . .

And I thought: But I will catch you yet, you nymph of perdition! The wood will soon be passed, you will have no cover then! And from her eyes, and the scanty gleam of her flying limbs, I never looked away, not even when I stumbled or ran against tree trunks in my blind haste. And at every clearing I flew more furiously, thinking to seize all of her with my gaze before she could cross the glade; but ever she found some little low tree, some bush of birch ungrown, or the far top branches of the next grove to screen her flying body and preserve allurement. And all the time she was dipping, dipping to the rim of the world.

And then I tripped; but, as I rose, I saw that she had lingered for me; her long sliding eyes were full, it seemed to me, of pity, as if she would have liked for me to have enjoyed the sight of her. I stood still, breathless, thinking that at last she would consent; but flinging back, up into the air, one dark-ivory arm, she sighed and vanished. And the breath of her sigh stirred all the birch-tree twigs just coloured with the dawn. Long I stood in that thicket gazing at the spot where she had leapt for me over the edge of the world—my heart quivering.

JOHN GALSWORTHY, *The Inn of Tranquillity*

Break of Day

And down the long and silent street,
The dawn with silver-sandalled feet,
Crept like a frightened girl.

OSCAR WILDE, *The Harlot's House*

Lively Din

Sir *Timerous*, I wish you well; but he I marry must promise me to live at *London*: I cannot abide to be in the Country . . . I cannot endure your early hunting matches there; to have my sleep disturbed at break of day, with heigh *Fowler Fowler*, there *Venus*, ah *Beauty*! and then a serenade of deep mouth'd curres, to answer the salutation of the Huntsman, as if hell were broke loose about me . . .

JOHN DRYDEN, *The Wild Gallant*

The Pleasures of—

He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

Old Testament: Proverbs

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—*Early Rising*

Yonder see the morning blink :
The sun is up, and up must I,
To wash and dress and eat and drink
And look at things and talk and think
And work, and God knows why . . .

A. E. HOUSMAN

The Piper at the Gates of Dawn

Slowly, but with no doubt or hesitation whatever, and in something of a solemn expectancy, the two animals passed through the broken, tumultuous water and moored their boat at the flowery margin of the island. In silence they landed, and pushed through the blossom and scented herbage and undergrowth that led up to the level ground, till they stood on a little lawn of a marvellous green, set round with Nature's own orchard-trees—crab-apple, wild cherry, and sloe . . .

Then suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe fall upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground . . .

Perhaps he would never have dared to raise his eyes, but that, though the piping was now hushed, the call and the summons seemed still dominant and imperious . . . Trembling he obeyed, and raised his humble head ; and then, in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while Nature, flushed with fullness of incredible colour, seemed to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper ; saw the backward sweep of the curved horns, gleaming in the growing daylight ; saw the stern, hooked nose between the kindly eyes that were looking down on them humorously, while the bearded mouth broke into a half-smile at the corners ; saw the rippling muscles on the arm that lay across the broad chest, the long supple hand still holding the pan-pipes only just fallen away from the parted lips ; saw the splendid curves of the shaggy limbs disposed in majestic ease on the sward . . .

"Rat!" he found breath to whisper, shaking. "Are you afraid?"

"Afraid?" murmured the Rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. "Afraid ! Of *Him*. O, never, never ! And yet—and yet—O, Mole, I am afraid ! "

Sudden and magnificent, the sun's broad golden disc showed itself over the horizon facing them ; and the first rays, shooting across the level water-meadows, took the animals full in the eyes and dazzled them. When they were able to look once more, the Vision had vanished, and the air was full of the carol of birds that hailed the dawn. KENNETH GRAHAME, *The Wind in the Willows*

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HEIR APPARENT

"Always," said my host, "always there has been a Lombardi on this land"

by HUGH MICHAEL HOGAN

UNTIL I heard the story, from the lips of Signor Capaldi himself, I had been cursing the British system which obliges the traveller to declare his profession on his passport. It is, after all, a man's own business how he earns his crust.

And I had cursed, also pretty roundly, the regulation of the local Carabinieri which entailed the showing of my passport to Signor Capaldi, the padrone of my hotel at San Silvestro. Because against the neat copperplate heading, *Profession*, inside the passport, was scrawled in a clerkly hand: "Writer."

That, if you do not know it, stands the world over as an open invitation to every bore, dilettante, man-of-the-world, the misunderstood, the well-intentioned, the scholarly, and the unspeakably dull, to unburden himself of every trivial incident that ever befell him—and to feel certain that whatever he tells you will go to make an immortal story. So that, as soon as Signor Capaldi let it be known in the hotel that I was, in his own words, "un grande scrittore inglese," I was subjected to the usual spate of stories.

To this habit of garrulous story-telling there were only two exceptions: the arthritic Emilio, who served me at table, a bent, gentle-looking man with white hair, exquisite manners, a charming smile, and the precious gift of silence—and Signor Capaldi himself. But Signor Capaldi did tell me one story, and I completely forgave him. Signor Capaldi, you see, had a flair.

He took me to the church door on Sunday morning, and with a fine, proud stroking of his enormous moustaches he explained: "I must leave you here, signore, I go upstairs, to the choir." He burst into one of his fits of uncontrollable merriment. "To sing, you know." He wiped his eyes. "Listen for me, signore, will you not?"

I laughed uproariously back at him. It was a habit which had been growing on me for almost a week. I was very conscious of my position there, outside the church of San Silvestro, laughing without reserve simply because I had caught the infection from

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Signor Capaldi. The villagers filing in to Mass paused upon the steps, and they, too, laughed with both of us. It was embarrassing.

When my host had recovered sufficiently he straightened his moustaches and said in a sort of stage whisper: "Watch out for them, signore. Observe. It will repay you."

"Observe whom?"

But he was laughing again, and could not answer. Unwilling to make an exhibition of myself a second time I turned away and went into the church.

I was not long left in doubt as to the people for whom I should watch out, and indeed, my host's caution to observe them was quite unnecessary. Even were I a devout individual, not readily distracted in church, the sheer might and majesty of their entrance would have caused me to look up. Being, as I am, a wretch notoriously susceptible to the seductions of the Evil One, I gave them my willing and undivided attention. In my opinion—and I hope you are going to agree—it was amply rewarded.

The children came first, walking slowly, reverently up the aisle. Their hands were joined, their eyes downcast. I counted heads as they went into their pew. There were nine of them, all red.

The woman followed at their heels. She was dark, about fifty, as nearly as I could judge, and of a soft, contented beauty. Like most of her countrywomen she was no longer slender, but, unlike them, she carried herself well, and, it seemed to me, not without an air of consequence.

The man came last, some paces behind his family. He walked stiffly, erect; his head bowed and his arms crossed bravely, almost theatrically, on his breast.

His attitude arrested my attention; the man himself held it. He was tall, well over six feet, and pinched-looking despite his well-cut black clothes. His hair was iron grey, cropped close against his skull. As he followed his family into the pew he turned momentarily, and I saw the strange, gaunt beauty of his face: the thin, determined mouth; the long, straight nose; the wide nostrils; the eyes, bright and earnest-looking under heavy lids. It was a face which made me think immediately: "Ah—an El Greco!"

I noticed, as he took his seat by the side of his wife, that I was not the only one to look at him. Heads were turning, all over the church, and bending together, and then turning away again in the direction of his pew. Here and there I heard whispering. My curiosity was aroused.

I was seated behind him, about the middle of the nave, and once Mass was begun had little opportunity for further observation. All I could see was that his movements—his rising, genuflection, and session—kept time rigorously with those of the celebrant; that

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standing, he was stiffly erect, arms crossed boldly on his breast; that kneeling, his head was bent low. During the sermon, rendered in an Italian as liquid as Signor Capaldi's wine, I could not fail to remark the approval he gave to the speaker's vehement denunciation of Il Diavolo, Il Mundo, and Il Carno.

Signor Capaldi was waiting for me outside the church, afterwards. He introduced me to several of his friends, describing me, with a flourish, as "Il grande scrittore, inglese." Fortunately for me, few of Signor Capaldi's friends were of a literary turn of mind. We moved from house to house, along the street, taking here a little Valpolicello, there a taste of Chianti, here a soupçon of bitter campari, and there a mouthful of grappa. His desire to sing increased with every hospitality offered, and by the time we were on the road back to the hotel I had completely forgotten my curiosity concerning the man in black.

Not so Signor Capaldi. As soon as we were alone again he turned to me, his eyes twinkling. "Well, what did you think?"

"Think?"

"Si: think. Of the family." His manner was at once theatrical. I felt sure that I was about to be told a tale.

"It's a fine family," I said. "It does your country credit."

He nodded. "Yes. Yes." He raised a bushy eyebrow. "What did you think of the man?"

"He seemed—"

"Do you know who he is, signore? He is Lombardi! The great man himself."

"I don't know—"

"He is Lombardi. He owns this land." My host raised his hand and swept it generously through an arc of a hundred and eighty degrees. "All of it."

"You mean he's the local squire?"

Signor Capaldi nodded vigorously. "Si. The squire, signore. Always there has been a Lombardi on this land. Always."

I thought that Signor Lombardi's appearance scarcely matched his role of country gentleman. I said as much to my host.

"Si. You are right, signore. And how do you see him?"

I gave the question a little thought. "A politician?"

Signor Capaldi frowned.

"Of the left, of course," I added hastily.

He shook his head.

"A philosopher, perhaps? Few of them, I have noticed, look contented."

He took my arm. His stage whisper came into effect again. "Shall I tell you a story?"

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With a polish, an ingenuousness which is the result of years of practice, I inclined my head towards him. He took out a cigar, rolled it in his chubby palms, pierced and carefully lit it. It was some time before he was ready to speak again.

"Signore," he began, "the man whom you saw this morning, Tertio Enrico Agostino Edmondo Mario di San Silvestro Lombardi, was the third, and youngest, son of his father, Enrico Agostino Michele Lorenzo di San Silvestro Lombardi." He paused, breathed deeply. "A fine man, Enrico."

I nodded.

"Before I retired and bought this hotel, signore, I was his bailiff, so that I know the family intimately." He took out his handkerchief, stroked his moustaches, and passed it over his shining bald head. "There were two other sons, both of them fine, strong young men, exactly like their father. Exactly so, signore. Shooting, fishing, fighting. And, signore, like so many of us, not without ah—fleshly ah—"

"Quite."

He nodded. "Si. Tertio, however, was different from his brothers. He was not so strong as they, and perhaps for this reason he preferred his books to his guns, his studies to the ah—*interests*—of the others.

"Si. He was a very quiet young man, then, signore, much given to walking alone, and to the study of nature. He could be seen in the fields in the early morning, listening to the song of the birds, or reading. Very quiet, signore.

"When he grew older, as befitted a youth of his rank and station, he attended some parties and balls, but it was plain that he found them distasteful, and would have been happier with his own company."

Here Signor Capaldi paused for dramatic effect, and loudly blew his nose. He replaced the handkerchief in his breast pocket, fastidiously pressed it into place. "So that it came as no surprise, signore, when eventually he announced his intention to enter San Bartolomeo."

"A university?"

He lowered his voice. "A monastery, signore: a *Cistercian* monastery!"

Of course, yes. Now I began to see it all. The bowed head. The arms crossed so upon the breast. "Is he unfrocked?"

My host looked alarmed for a moment, then: "No. Nonononononononono, not that." He began to laugh softly.

"Then . . .?"

"Ah, yes, signore, there is a reason." He puffed hard on his cigar. "I am coming to that. The other two, his brothers, lived

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the life that was expected of them. They went to school, and then to the University of Rome. They were good boys, but young and light-hearted. They were less then twenty when, to the sorrow of the world, the Kaiser declared war. They joined the army, signore, and, to cut short a long story, they were both killed."

He sighed, then quickly brightened again. "It is for this reason, signore, that you saw here this morning Tertio Enrico Agostino Edmondo Mario di—"

"Yes," I interrupted, "I remember."

"Si." He became serious again. "Well, the shock of his loss was too much for the old man, Enrico, and shortly afterwards he followed his sons. And now, you see, there was a great problem, signore, because the two who had joined the army were unmarried, and it was clear that Tertio Enrico Agosti—was the last of the Lombardis!"

My host held the cigar away from his body, looked abstractedly at its glowing end as he let me weigh the import of his words.

"Consider, signore, what that meant, here in San Silvestro. Perhaps you would not understand. In England, no doubt, it is different. But here in San Silvestro, signore, always there has been a Lombardi. The family is as old as the land, and to think of the land without a Lombardi is—is unthinkable, signore!"

I nodded.

"Worse, you see, in accordance with some ancient charter, the land could be inherited by none but a son or a male first cousin. And if there were no such male to take it over, it became at once the property of the State!

"Well, signore, there were three ladies, aunts of Tertio, all widows, and all without sons. They were also, you understand, signore, no longer young. Well, they were Lombardis—to the backbone!—and proud of their line. It grieved them to think that the lands would eventually become the property of the State, and, signore, they were unwilling to resign themselves to the passing of their name.

"Si. So these three met together, and it was decided that they must point out to their nephew Tertio where clearly his duty lay: he would have to leave the monastery."

I began to laugh.

"Oh no, signore! Oh nonononononono! It was not so easy as that. Oh no! The good Tertio had by now been in his order for several years. They wrote to him, but he ignored their request. He would not leave San Bartolomeo. They wrote again and again, but without avail."

Signor Capaldi rubbed his hands. But this was drama. "No, signore; he refused to leave! And so pressure was brought to

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bear, signore. The good ladies now wrote to the abbot. They begged him to indicate to their nephew where clearly his duty lay.

"The abbot spoke with Tertio. The young man was grieved. He asked time to consider the issue. He prayed and he fasted, but as the months went by it became clear that he had no intention of returning to the fleshpots. His aunts became angry.

"So now, signore, they laid aside the silken glove. They went in force to San Bartolomeo, and had audience of the abbot. Had not the Lombardis, in one generation or another, given to the community most of its present possessions? Why, was not the very land upon which the monastery was built the grant of a Lombardi? Would the good monks now sever themselves forever from their so generous benefactors? And if they did, could the lord abbot presume that the State would take their place?

"Si, signore, so was the case presented. And so, to cut short a long story, it was made plain to the devout Tertio that he must renounce the selfishness of his fasting and almsdeeds, and return to the world in order to re-establish the proud name of Lombardi. And eventually, signore, he was brought back."

I began to laugh again, but Signor Capaldi had not finished.

"Hoho!" he said. "Hohohohohohoho! But now, signore, the problem, far from being solved, had only just begun. Si. For the young Tertio had by now become set in his ways, and it was difficult for him to change the habits of the cloister. Be it said in his favour, signore, that once he had taken the step of returning to il mundo, he did his best. He visited the houses of the nobility, when they gave entertainments, and even, at the instigation of his aunts, gave some of his own. But he was changed too much. By now, he was a man alone, and apart from his fellows; the ladies were shy of him, and he of the ladies. No progress was made.

"And so, signore, a marriage had to be arranged. His aunts were impatient, and though it grieved them to do so, they were content to match him up outside their class. In due course he was married to the daughter of the mayor of San Silvestro."

"And then," I said, as gravely as I could, "they all lived happily ever after, no doubt."

But Signor Capaldi held up his hands. "Ah, no, signore. Not so. At first all went well. The couple seemed well matched. They attended many of the fiestas in the countryside, they opened bazaars, and schools, and hospitals, and engaged in much that has benefited all of us. But, signore, one thing was lacking."

"Lacking?"

"Si, signore, lacking. As the months went by, then a year,

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two years, three years, it became evident that the aunts of Signor Tertio were being denied the rightful solace of their declining years: there was no sign whatever of any future Lombardi!"

"Ah!"

"Si. And as the ladies grew older, their visits to the couple became more frequent, lasted longer. When they left, books would be found in the house. They—"

"Books!"

"Si, signore: books. Of a certain ah—*advisory* nature, signore."

I bowed to his delicacy.

"Si. But, signore," he held out his hands, palms upward, "they were of no practical use. Nonono. The position, signore, was serious. Clearly, something must be done."

I looked hard at Signor Capaldi.

"So it was, signore, that the whole household was exhorted to pray for the couple, that they might be blessed with il dono d'un figlio—with the gift of a son. And very soon, signore, the whole village had joined with the household. Prayers were offered, candles were lit in every available window."

"Ah! And then—"

"Then, for a time, nothing. For several months, yes, nothing. And then, at last, it was noticed that la Signora Lombardi no longer sat in her usual pew in church, but preferred to stay nearer to the door. As time went on she arrived at church later, and left earlier, than the rest of us. And as time went on further still, signore, there was not one in the village who did not rejoice to think that he had played some part in the felicitous course which events, now so clearly, were taking." Signor Capaldi smiled benignly. "And in due course, signore, the happy event, so long awaited, came to pass. The Signora Lombardi was delivered of a son."

I smiled in return. We began now to climb the slight incline towards the hotel.

"Si, signore: a son. Primo Gregorio Bartolomeo Sebastiano Teodoro di San Silvestro Lombardi: the first of the new foundation! And 'foundation,' signore, is perhaps a not ill-chosen word. For in due course, another son followed the first: Secundo Vittorio Emmanuelo Bernardo—"

"Yes."

"—Ignazio di San Silvestro Lombardi! And now it seemed that Signor Tertio, having acquired, as it were, il dono—the gift—he could not lose it, for son followed son with unfailing regularity."

"Yes, indeed."

"Si: for the next seven years, signore." He threw out his hands. "Ah, signore, what bounty! What—," he turned to face me, and there was a twinkle in his bright brown eye, "what fecundity!"

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We had come to the hotel. On the verandah, the waiter Emilio was standing, a napkin draped carefully over one arm. As we drew near he indicated a table upon which had been placed a bottle of Spumante and two glasses, and when we had seated ourselves he opened the wine and served us. I noticed again his fine, slender hands, his easy, contented smile. I moved my head to catch the play of light on his soft, white hair. His whole attitude, his every gesture seemed to express his delight in serving us. He set down the glasses, smiled, and withdrew to the kitchen again. It was only when he had gone that I realized Signor Capaldi was watching me. " I have not yet finished my story, signore."

I looked up. " I'm sorry."

" Signore, I have told you, I think, that I was for many years bailiff to the house of Lombardi ? " He closed his eyes, held up a deprecatory hand. " I never told you, I think, that Emilio, also, was in service there ? No ? Oh yes, signore, he was butler. His father before him was butler to the family. Si, and *his* father too. Naturally Emilio was, although a servant, yet a very privileged member of the household. There was little that he did not know."

" Quite."

" Si, signore, he was privileged. And it was but right for he had ever the best interests of the family at heart. His family had served the Lombardis for generations. There was nothing he would not do for them. He was the perfect servant."

He leaned over me, put his hand on my arm and his mouth close to my ear. " Can I trust you with a secret, signore ? "

I nodded eagerly.

" Did you notice, signore, the colour of the hair of the family Lombardi ? "

I did. " Red. Very red."

He smiled, knowingly. " Signore, in the great hall of the Lombardi home there is a portrait gallery. It stretches a very long way. There are Lombardis there who fought with the Orsini." He dropped his voice. " And signore, not one has red hair."

I waited.

" He has grown grey, signore, and bent, in the service of his master, but as a young man the hair of Emilio shone like copper ! " He leaned over the table, took up his glass, and raised it to my own. " Let us drink, signore. Let us drink to a story of faithful service." He stood up, raised his glass towards the kitchen.

" To Emilio : the saviour of San Silvestro ! "

* * *

Love is the delusion that one woman differs from another.

H. L. MENCKEN

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★*The grim darkness of the Welsh pits and the hazards of the coal face were well known to A. J. Cronin in his early days as doctor and medical inspector in the mining villages of South Wales—before he abandoned his stethoscope to become a successful novelist. Now in his fifties and living in America, he records in his autobiography "Adventures in Two Worlds" vivid and poignant memories of the heroic courage of the miners.*

FACE OF COURAGE

by A. J. CRONIN

SOME eight weeks later, on a crisp December morning, I came out, before breakfast, to the front porch of "The Glen." The little town lay tranquilly before me and, as I gazed at its familiar outlines, the thought of our impending departure gave me a pang of regret.

For three years now we had lived in Tredegar. Here we had really taken up the yoke of married life; here our first child, Vincent, had been born. The work which I had done might not rank high in the social or professional scale. I didn't wear a frock-coat and a stiff collar, but more often than not leggings and hob-nail boots. I usually walked straight into my patients' houses without knocking. I had no bedside manner to speak of, and could discourage a malingerer with the rudest adjectives. Yet I had made many friends among the miners and officials of the surrounding collieries.

They never directly paid me fees—as I have explained, my quarterly cheque came from the society—but always at Christmas I received evidence of their regard in a host of homely presents. There would be a couple of ducks or chickens from one, a print of fresh butter from another, a dozen new-laid eggs from a third . . . nor should I neglect to mention old Mrs. Griffiths whom I had almost (but, to be honest, not quite) cured of her rheumatism, and who hobbled across the bridge on New Year's Eve to offer us her blessings and a fine fat goose.

There was a quality in this gratitude which moved me profoundly—something which went deep down to the very roots of life. Then why should I be leaving? Most of my classmates at the University had already settled down permanently in steady provincial practices. Alas, in me, the urge to move forward was not to be denied. The previous month I had handed in my resignation—in another ten days we should be gone.

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Suddenly, as I stood there, regretful, yet feeling my heart lift up at the prospect of new adventure, I heard a faint and distant concussion, less an actual detonation than a vibration of the air, as though a great harp string had been plucked by a giant hand, behind me. It came from the neighbouring valley, lasted only for a moment, then vanished, so slight, so swift to come and go, it seemed of little consequence. Yet to one acquainted with this district, surrounded by so many mines, it had an ominous significance and I listened intently, anxiously, for a confirmation of my fear.

Nothing happened, however, and a few minutes later I went in to breakfast. But I had barely begun my first cup of coffee when I heard a hooter sound the alarm, six long blasts—and almost at once the telephone rang. It was George Conway, secretary of the Medical Committee. Briefly he told me that a disaster had occurred in the Ystfad Colliery at Pengelly across the mountain, they had sent out a routine call for aid. Would I go over at once.

Hastily, I swallowed a few mouthfuls of food, finished my coffee and set off across the ridge on my motor-bike. It was no more than two miles by mountain track to Pengelly and I reached the village in less than five minutes. Yet already the news of the calamity was travelling through the narrow streets. Doors in the terraces were open, men and women rushing downhill towards the colliery. As they ran, more ran with them. They ran as if they could not help themselves, as if the pit had suddenly become a magnet drawing them irresistibly towards it.

When I arrived five hundred men and women had gathered on the outskirts of the pit yard, and there were more outside. They stood in silence, the women mostly in shawls, the men without overcoats. It had been snowing here and their figures were very black against the white snow. They stood like some vast chorus, massed in silence under the clear sky. They were not the actors in the drama, but they were of it none the less.

Eight o'clock had just struck when I pushed my way into the pit yard and entered the wooden colliery office, where a number of the surface crew, all in their working clothes, were collected. The mine manager, Dai Jenkins, whom I knew well, was there with his deputy, Tom Lewis, looking at the crowd. As I entered the deputy was saying:

"Will I have the yard gates shut?"

"No," answered the other. "Have a fire lighted in the yard, a large fire. It's cold for them standing there and God knows they may stand long enough."

In the pause which followed I asked what had happened. At first Jenkins did not seem to hear, then, turning upon me his

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strained and harassed gaze, he told me that water had broken into the pit from the old workings. Both main shafts were flooded and both morning shifts, sixty-one men in all, were entombed. They were waiting for the first rescue party to bring heavy pumping equipment from the emergency centre at Gilfach. They could not tell how things were underground, having lost all contact with the trapped men. They could only wait for the moment, until the rescue party arrived.

As he spoke, more people came crowding into the office, two of the underviewers, a young inspector of mines, another colliery manager from farther down the valley, and a party of volunteers from the neighbouring colliery. There was no confusion, no babble of voices, but an attitude of such deep gravity it filled me with foreboding.

Suddenly, in the midst of this tense expectancy, the mine telephone whirred—not the public service instrument upon the manager's desk, but the wall attachment of the colliery system which communicated only with the underground workings. Instantly there was a mortal silence, then, in three strides, Jenkins was at the phone. He spun the little handle violently, lifted the receiver.

"Hello, hello!" Then his face paled, he half turned to the other: "My God . . . it's Roberts."

At first I did not understand. Then I realized, with a contraction of my heart, that a voice, the voice of a man not yet dead, was rising out of the dark tomb of the flooded mine, fleeing in despairing hope over water-logged wires, to us, on the surface, two miles away.

"Hello, hello." Jenkins was listening now, he listened for three minutes with strained intentness, then rapidly, in a hard clear voice, he began to speak:

"Listen to me, Roberts, bach. You must make for the old Penygroes shaft. You can't come out this way, both shafts are water-sealed and it may be days before we clear them. You must travel the old workings. Go right up the slant. Break through the frame dam at the top east side. That takes you into the upper level of the old workings. Don't be afraid of water, that's all in the bottom levels. Go along the road, it's all main road, don't take the trenches nor the right dip, keep bearing due east for fifteen hundred yards until you strike the old Penygroes shaft."

A thick, roaring noise came over the wire, audible in the room, and Jenkins's voice rose feverishly to a shout:

"Do you hear me? The rescue party will meet you there. Do you hear me?" But his words were lost as a water blast tore out the wires and left the instrument dead in his hand. He let it fall—it swung dangling, while he stood there, bowed, motionless. At last, wiping his brow, he revealed to us what Roberts had told him.

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The first shift had been working their heading in the usual way, drilling and shot firing to bring down the coal. But Roberts, the under-manager, after the last two shots, found a thin trickle of water coming from the middle of the coal face. There appeared to be no pressure behind it but it had a bad smell of blackdamp, he knew it was not virgin coal water and he did not like the look of it.

Immediately the men began to tub the water, to try to get rid of it by letting it through the pack walls on the low side of the drawing road.

Meanwhile, Roberts felt it his duty to warn the second shift of twenty-three men working farther *inbye*, two hundred yards up the branch. He started off and had almost reached the other face when he heard a terrific bang. He knew it was an inrush. He had expected trouble but nothing so sudden or terrible as this. Instinctively, he turned back, but after going ten yards he saw the water rushing down the main haulage, roof high, in a great swell of sound.

The gas thrown back by the rushing water extinguished his lamp but as he stood, petrified, for ten seconds in the sounding darkness, he knew that the men of his first shift, all of them, were drowning, or already drowned, in that frightful flood.

The speed of the water was ferocious, its volume that of a tidal wave. On and out it swept, reached the pit shaft, spouted and cascaded, swirling the bodies of the first shift in a backlash, at pit bottom, drowning the ponies in their stalls there. As fast as one might think, the water had risen in the two main shafts, sealing the pit absolutely and preventing all access to the workings from the surface.

The suddenness of the calamity was unbelievable and deadly, but Roberts and his mates on the second shift were still alive. They were at the top of the slant and the inrush went away from them. They were altogether twenty-two men and a boy of fourteen, standing together without speech—they knew enough to make them silent. But Roberts had recovered himself—long familiar with the mine, he remembered a return airway through which he might lead the party to a higher level.

Starting off, he found the airway, began to crawl along it, on his stomach, followed by the others. But before he had gone thirty yards, he felt himself turning sick and sleepy, and hurriedly he ordered his men back. The airway was full of blackdamp, carbon monoxide driven from the old waste workings by the water, and Roberts knew then that every escape road was blocked. Trapped in the high dead-end of the branch, the water and blackdamp rising steadily about them, they had perhaps half an hour to live. It was then, in this last extremity, that Roberts had remembered the telephone.

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When Jenkins finished speaking—and his account, terse and technical, was briefer by far than the explanation I have given here—for a full minute no one said anything. Then, in an even voice, Mr. Deakin, the mines inspector, broke out:

"If they get through to the old workings there's just a chance."

Jenkins nodded, turned to his deputy:

"Take ten men and go to Old Penygroes Shaft. Make an inspection—as quick and complete as you can. Find out the condition of the shaft. Then hurry back to me."

Meantime three trucks had rolled into the yard bringing the pumping gear, and the manager left the office to start off its erection. It would take hours to complete this heavy task and I sensed that Jenkins had little faith in it. All his hopes were centred in these old workings which honeycombed the deep, surrounding strata. If only they could be penetrated we might reach the trapped men.

Alone in the office, I now telephoned George Conway in Tredegar, giving him the facts of the disaster, asking if I should stay on duty at the pit. The secretary endorsed my desire to remain, indeed he insisted I hold myself, from now on, at Jenkins's disposal—Dr. Davies would take over my practice until further notice.

As I rejoined the group outside, the deputy came back from the old Penygroes Shaft. There was rubbish and blackdamp in the shaft, he told Jenkins, a man lowered on a crab rope had come out pretty sick, but he believed the shaft could be cleared of gas and stowing in twenty-four hours.

Immediately, then, the necessary gear was assembled, and leaving the pump erection at the main headstocks to proceed, a party of picked men led by the manager and his deputy went out across the troubled ground towards the old shaft. Following the instructions I had been given, I went with them. It had turned colder and a few thin snow-flakes began to fall, trembling gently out of the unseen sky.

The disused shaft lay on a wretched piece of waste land known as the Common, all hummocks and subsidences from the network of tunnels underneath, now covered with snow and swept by a bitter wind. Small wonder they called it troubled land. Here they began to fit headgear, winding engine and a fan.

In spite of the fire in the pit yard nearby, everybody had left the yard and stood gathered at the Common. They stood well back from the riggers who were raising the headstocks, working fast and hard.

Within three hours they had fitted headgear, steam winding engine and fan, then they began to free the shaft of blackdamp.

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When the gas was finally cleared out, a fresh relay, standing ready, went in and started to remove the stowing which blocked the road into the waste. These men worked fast, so fast they were clearing the stowing from the main road at the rate of six feet an hour. There was more stowing than they had thought. But the relays launched themselves in waves, they battered into the obstruction, there was something frantic and abandoned in their assault. It was more than human progress, as one relay slipped in another staggered out.

"This road runs due west," said Jenkins to the inspector. "It ought to take us pretty near the mark."

"Yes," the other answered. "And we ought to be near the end of that damned stowing."

All day long this work went on and by midnight the relays had cleared one hundred and forty feet of the old main road. Two hours later they broke through into clear road, into an open section of the old waste. A loud cheer rang out, a cheer which ascended the shaft and thrilled into the ears of those who still waited on the surface.

But there was no second cheer. Immediately beyond, by the light of torches, it was seen that the main road ran into a dip or trough which was full of water and impassable.

Dirty, covered with coal dust, wearing no collar and tie, the inspector stared at Jenkins.

"Oh, my good God!" he said hopelessly. "If only we'd known this before."

Jenkins remained unmoved:

"We must expect difficulties. We must blast a new road above the trough."

There was something so sternly inflexible in the manager's words that even the inspector was impressed.

"My God!" he said, exhausted to the verge of collapse. "That's the spirit. Come on, then, and we'll blast your blasted roof."

They began to blast the roof, to blast down the iron-hard whinstone into the water so that the trough might be filled and a road established above water level. A compressor was brought down to supply the drills; the finest diamond drill bores were used. The work was killing. It proceeded in darkness, dust, sweat, and the fumes of high explosive. It proceeded in a sort of insane frenzy. Only Jenkins remained calm. He was there, the motive, the directing force. For a full eighteen further hours he did not leave the Penygroes Shaft. Yet he ordered the others to take some rest.

Emergency cots and blankets had been brought into the long "lamp room" in the pit yard, and here, with the inspector and other officials, I stretched out and got six hours' sleep. Fresh from this respite, the inspector pleaded with Jenkins to knock off.

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"Take some sleep, for God's sake. You're killing yourself."

But the manager shook his head. All that day, and the next, he snatched only an odd half hour on his office couch.

The whinstone blasting was proving incredibly difficult, an almost insuperable task. As the hours moved on, with only the slowest progress, insensibly hope began to fade. Nothing was said, but the expressions of the rescuers reflected a growing desperation.

On the evening of the third day, Jenkins told me to spell off for the night. As I passed through Pengelly on my way home the streets were deserted, every door closed, not a single child at play. Many of the shops were shuttered. A still agony lay upon the Terraces, the stillness of despair. From opposite ends of the street two women approached. They were friends. They passed each other with averted faces. Not a word: silence: even their footsteps silenced by the snow.

Within the houses the same silence. In the houses of the entombed men the breakfast things were laid out upon the table in preparation for their return. It was the tradition. Even at night the blinds remained undrawn.

I returned to the pit early next morning. They had lowered the water level in the main shaft—not the Penygroes Shaft—sufficiently to allow divers to descend. The divers had to contend with a maximum head of eighteen feet of water in the levels. In spite of this they fought their way along the levels as far as the fall. They made an arduous, exhaustive search. No one knew better than they how useless this search would be. All that the divers found was thirty-eight drowned bodies.

The divers came back. They reported the absence of any living soul. They reported that at least another month would be required to de-water the levels completely. Then they started to bring out the bodies: the drowned men, roped together, dangling out of the mine into the brightness of the day they did not see, laid silently on stretchers, and given to their womenfolk in that snow-trodden yard.

Everything now was concentrated on the approach by Penygroes. Yet any hope that remained seemed forlorn. It was fully realized that the men unaccounted for might never have reached the waste. Moreover, eight days had now elapsed since the date of the disaster, and it was a slender chance that these men might still be alive. Nevertheless, in a fresh frenzy of endeavour, efforts above the trough were redoubled. The rescuers spurted, strained every nerve. Six days after blasting was begun the last charge was fired, they broke through and regained the old main roadway beyond the trough. Exhausted but jubilant, the rescuers pressed forward. They were met, sixty paces due west, by a complete fall of whinstone roof. They drew up hopelessly.

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"Oh, my God!" the inspector moaned. "There might be a half mile of this. We'll never reach them, never. This is the end at last."

Utterly spent, he leaned against the whinstone rock and buried his face in his arm.

"We must go on," Jenkins said with sudden loudness, and a note of hysteria in his voice. "We must go on."

At that moment, when all seemed lost, a faint, unearthly sound was heard in that unfathomable darkness, an almost ghostly tapping . . . ta, ta . . . ta, ta . . . ta, ta, ta, tap, like a weak tattoo beat out upon a tribal drum.

"For God's sake, listen! . . . Can't you hear it? . . . The jowling."

Jowling is the name given to that method of signifying one's position by striking the rock face with a hammer—many men have been saved by jowling their rescuers towards them. Everyone stood stock still, with straining ears. Feebly, wearily, as though by one long since exhausted, the tapping was repeated.

"By God, you're right," cried the inspector. "They're there . . . close to us . . . just through the rock. They hear us."

"Stand back, behind there," shouted Jenkins through cupped hands.

A final wild blaze of effort, then, with a rending crash of whinstone, we were through, through to the imprisoned men.

There they lay, huddled together, with their backs against the branch wall, silent and spectral forms, clothed by their own comradeship, a few guttered-out pit candles at their feet.

But they were alive, every man of them; yes, the boy was alive as well, crying softly to himself as we came forward.

They were all too weak to stir themselves, nor would I permit them to be moved until I had administered to each one a pint of strong bouillon laced with brandy, glucose solution, and a hypodermic of strychnine.

"They'll recover, doctor?" Jenkins asked anxiously.

"Yes . . . every one of them."

Slowly, carefully, we brought them out. News of the rescue had preceded us and as we came forth to the surface there arose in a great volume of sound, soberly, yet spontaneously, swelling to the sky from the huge congregation assembled on the troubled waste land of the Common, that favourite hymn, *O God, our help in ages past.*

It was a moment of emotion that rent the heart, a sight I shall never forget. Yet through it all, the triumph of achievement, the gladness of reunion, one could not forget those thirty-eight coffins,

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ranged in the hall of Emmanuel Chapel, not a hundred yards along the street. The mass funeral was held the day before we left Tredegar. I attended it. A sad leave-taking to the valleys of South Wales. Yet it brought home to me, who from custom had perhaps grown heedless and indifferent, the endless hazards faced by these brave men.

Years later, in a famous London club, a plump, pink-cheeked habitué, having finished an excellent dinner and a pint of burgundy, was standing, newspaper in hand, his back to a glowing fire, holding forth to a little coterie on the damnable iniquity of the current miners' strike.

"Another sixpence an hour," he complained. "There's no satisfying these cursed blighters. What the devil do they want?"

"Only the right to live!" I interposed mildly.

I was a new member at the time and should certainly have held my tongue. Instead, I told of this disaster, and of those thirty-eight "cursed blighters" who had no further need of those extra six pennies an hour which their comrades had dared to claim.

* * *

ANSWERS to LOVE THROUGH THE AGES on page 22

The correct order is :—3, 5, 7, 2, 10, 8, 4, 6, 1, 9.

Allow one point each for the author and title of the work, and an extra point for placing the poem in the right chronological order, making a possible total of thirty.

The sources of the tributes are :—

1. "*Love in the Valley*," *by George Meredith*, 1828—1909.
2. "*Othello*," *by William Shakespeare*, 1564—1616.
3. "*The Song of Solomon*," *Author Unknown, probably 4th or 3rd Century*, B.C.
4. "*A Red, Red Rose*," *by Robert Burns*, 1759—96.
5. "*Blow, Northern Wind*," *Author Unknown, c.* 1300.
6. "*Sonnets from the Portuguese*," *by Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 1806—1861.
7. "*The Bargain*," *by Sir Philip Sidney*, 1554—86.
8. "*Annie Laurie*," *by William Douglas*, 1672—1748.
9. "*When You are Old*," *by William Butler Yeats*, 1865–1939.
10. "*To Lucasta, going to the Wars*," *by Richard Lovelace*, 1618–58.

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TO BE YOUR VALENTINE

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window . . .

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

I away and to the Temple, and thence to my cozen Turner's, where having the last night been told by her that she had drawn me for her Valentine, I did this day call at the New Exchange, and bought her a pair of green silk stockings and garters and shoestrings, and two pair of jessimy gloves, all coming to about 28s., and did give them her this noon . . . In Seething Lane met young Mrs. Daniel, and I stopt, and she had been at my house, but found nobody within, and tells me that she drew me for her Valentine this year, so I took her into the coach, and was going to the other end of the town thinking to have taken her abroad, but remembered that I was to go out with my wife this afternoon—and so to a milliner at the corner shop going into Bishopsgate and Leadenhall Street, and there did give her eight pairs of gloves, and so dismissed her, and so I home . . .

SAMUEL PEPYS, *Diary*, 1668–9

Carpe Diem

Choose me your Valentine,
Next let us marry—
Love to the death will pine
If we long tarry.

ROBERT HERRICK

Forget Me Not

Nelly, our little Welsh maid who could neither read nor write, fidgeted with her letter, and at last making a great effort, said she had received it that morning, but had not been able to read it. "A Valentine, Nelly?" we asked. When we fairly opened the letter, she gave a suppressed titter; but we were soon lost in admiration. Nothing vulgar greeted us; none of the common herd of Valentines full of red cupids and redder hearts, but the most elegant designs of lace paper and gold. A border of flowers and leaves and birds, all snow-white, and in the centre what looked to be a square of gold and green. To our great admiration, the green and gold proved two folding doors, which, when unclosed, revealed a painting of the

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loveliest of damsels with the most graceful of youths at her feet. A piece of silver paper was still left in the envelope; we drew it forth and found enclosed an embossed card, on which was a copy of verses entitled "Forget me not."

Again the depths of the big envelope were searched, and lying perdu in one corner was something that felt like a crown-piece, but turned out to be a gigantic white peppermint-drop, with a red-lettered surface. "I love you well" was the motto we had the pleasure of reading to Nelly. She took up the empty envelope and turned it round. "Is this a B, Ma'am?" she asked. The postmark was ill-stamped. We examined it well, and after much patience found it to be "Aberdare." The blushing Nelly laughed, and we had every reason to suppose the voluminous Valentine had come from the right person.

ANNE BEALE, in *Argosy*, 1875

Sugar and Spice

Good Bishop Valentine
Wandered all the night
Seeking out young lovers
And urging them to write:
With bags full of sugar-plums,
Rose and violet bowers,
Hearts, doves, true-love knots,
And lace-paper flowers

Good Bishop Valentine
By the moon's beam
Went seeking out young maidens
And urging them to dream:
With ribbons for their ringlets,
Love's silken strings,
Orange-blossom posies
And gold wedding-rings.

ELEANOR FARJEON

White Magic

Last Friday was Valentine's Day, and the night before, I got five bay-leaves, and pinned four of them to the four corners of my pillow, and the fifth to the middle; and then, if I dreamt of my sweetheart, Betty said we should be married before the year was out.

From The Connoisseur, 1754–1756

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Charm of Birds

And in a glade, upon an hille of flowers,
Was set this noble goddesse Nature . . .
For this was on Seynt Valentynes day,
Whan every bird cometh there to choose his mate,
Of every kinde, that men thenke may ;
And that so huge a noyse gan they make,
That erthe and sea, and tree, and every lake
So ful was, that scarcely was ther space
For me to stonde, so ful was al the place . . .
What shulde I sayn ? Of fowles of every kinde
That in this worlde have fethres and stature,
Men mighten in that place assembled finde
Before the noble goddess Nature . . .

GEOFFREY CHAUCER,
The Parlement of Foules

Immortal Go-Between

Hail to thy returning festival, old Bishop Valentine ! great is thy name in the rubric, thou venerable Archflamen of Hymen ! Immortal go-between ; who and what manner of person art thou ? Art thou but a *name*, typifying the restless principle which impels poor humans to seek perfection in union ? or wert thou indeed a mortal prelate, with thy tippet and thy rochet, thy apron on, and decent lawn sleeves ?

CHARLES LAMB

Bridal Song

What meane these Ladies, which (as though
They were to take a clock to peeces,) goe
So nicely about the Bride ;
A Bride, before a good night could be said,
Should vanish from her cloathes, into her bed
As Soules from bodies steale, and are spy'd.
But now she is laid ; What though she bee ?
Yet there are more delayes, For, where is he ?
He comes, and passes through Spheare after Spheare,
First her sheetes, then her Armes, then any where.
Let not this day, then, but this night be thine,
Thy day was but the eve to this, O Valentine.

JOHN DONNE, *An Epithalamion on the Lady Elizabeth and Count Palatine being married on St. Valentine's Day* 1613

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TIDDLER'S GROUND

"No," snorted the Colonel, "I have not seen your wife. But I have heard her"

by LAURENCE KIRK

GANDERGOOSE PARK lies in a pleasant part of Worcestershire and was built by Sir Miles Gander in 1723. The first part of the name speaks for itself. Nobody knows when the second part was added ; but tradition tells that it came about because the geese, that is to say the rich young women the Ganders married, did all the paying both for the building of the extra wings and the other Gander extravagances.

The gay gambling Ganders managed to keep the bailiffs away for nearly two centuries. After that the direct line became extinct and the Park embarked on a chequered career. In the first world war it became first a Divisional Headquarters and then a convalescent home. Between wars it was let successively to a Maharajah, a Brazilian millionaire and a Hungarian Count ; and finally it became a Go-as-you-please school. That pretty well finished off the remains of the furniture and the interior decoration.

In the second world war it was first a gas school and then a training camp for parachutists. Some entrepreneur during this period managed to steal most of the lead off the roof and that made the inside rather damp. The Coal Board looked at it but decided that it was not big enough. And finally the horrified mortgagees discovered that they weren't mortgagees any longer but the sole and rightful owners of Gandergoose Park.

At this point a resourceful house agent came into the picture. He pointed out to the mortgagees that they could easily get their money back if only they would spend a little more. Gandergoose Park could be converted at a very reasonable cost into twelve well-appointed flats : four in each wing and four in the main body of the building. Each flat would be entirely self-contained, with its own kitchen ; but the main salon and the extensive gardens would be communal, the upkeep being included in the rent. The occupants would therefore have the advantage both of privacy and of club life, of a town flat and a country house, all at the same time.

The mortgagees weren't biting as yet. But the house agent was a good talker and when he showed them his waiting-list they began to

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be more interested. He could let each flat within twenty-four hours of its completion. The tenants would all be—as the house agent phrased it—of the middle income group, who could afford reasonable rents. It would be an important contribution to the problem of the housing shortage and there would therefore be no difficulty about building permits. Enough of the original furniture had survived to fit out the salon, and even with the cost of repairing the roof, the mortgagees could look forward to a return of twelve to fifteen per cent on their money.

On paper it was absolutely foolproof. The mortgagees signed on the dotted line and coughed up the extra money for the alterations.

The losses, libels and lawsuits that followed could have been avoided if the mortgagees had known less about finance and more about human nature. Not one of them had paused to consider why it was necessary to tell us to love our neighbours as ourselves. A very modest amount of thought would have warned them that we are never told to do the things that we do naturally and like doing. Obviously we were told to love our neighbours because we don't naturally love them and there is very little hope of our ever doing so.

That was why there was an eight-foot wall round Gandergoose Park; and if there were now a few gaps in it, it certainly wasn't because the people who had made the gaps were welcomed inside.

At this point the mortgagee should have been able to convince himself that his countrymen were a dubious prospect for any experiments in communal living. Was it wise to have the salon as a common meeting place where people might get to know each other better and like each other worse? And if the salon was a danger wasn't the garden a much greater danger still? The English were even more monogamous about their gardens than they were about their wives. An Englishman might have a sneaking admiration for someone else's garden, or even someone else's wife; but if any other man laid a finger on *his* garden, or even made a suggestion as to its possible improvement, he was just as enraged as if his wife had been insulted.

If the mortgagee had reached this point in the argument he would no doubt have scrapped the scheme altogether, or at least have deleted that clause in the seven-year lease which enabled both landlord and tenant to terminate the agreement after six months. The clause was put in specifically to protect the mortgagees and to nip a troublesome tenant in the bud. That was just the effect that it didn't have, but then nobody need waste much sympathy over a mortgagee.

The house agent fulfilled his part of the bargain. Within ten

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minutes of the workmen moving out of the West Wing, the four sets of tenants were moving in. These were Colonel and Mrs. Rumboldt to Flat A: Mr. and Mrs. Baldock to Flat B: Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Cranwell to Flat C; and the lady whose name nobody could remember to Flat D.

For forty-eight hours it was like a mass honeymoon. Everyone was ready to help everyone else. They had only to ask and it was given unto them, whether it was a pint of milk or aid in removing a wardrobe which had stuck in a passage. The second evening, when the worst of the moving in was over, the Colonel produced a bottle of sweet sherry and asked everyone down to the salon for a house-warming. He didn't disclose the reason for this unexpected generosity until the glasses were being filled for the second time; but then he let it out very gently.

"You know, I've been thinking," he began. "This gardener chap here seems quite a decent fellow, but there's no doubt that he will need some supervision."

There were murmurs of assent from all except Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Cranwell, who had designs on the garden themselves. The season was early May and it was already possible to see how the garden was going to turn out. It was in fact quite obviously going to be a gardener's glory, with borders of lobelia and alyssum, and behind these straight rows of uninteresting plants, each clinging to a massive stake.

The murmurs of assent were dying down when Mrs. Crewe spoke up.

"My friend Mrs. Cranwell is an expert on colour-massing. She has written articles on the subject."

"Quite, quite," the Colonel agreed tactfully. "But if I may say so, it is not a matter of colour-massing just at this moment, but simply of getting the gardener to do as he's told."

"There's something in that," Mr. Baldock announced.

"And George has a very great experience in handling men." It was Mrs. Rumboldt who added this quickly.

"Oh, I don't know about that." The Colonel had his eye firmly on Mrs. Crewe. "But I think it would be easier if we appointed one person from whom the gardener was to take his orders."

"Here, here," said Mr. Baldock. "The only thing I'm interested in is tomatoes. Fresh, ripe, juicy tomatoes."

"We could form a committee," Mrs. Crewe suggested.

"Of those who know something about the subject," Mrs. Cranwell added a little acidly. "It is after all solely a matter of colour-massing. What you want is an arrangement of mauves and blues and purples. But particularly mauves, of course."

The Colonel snorted. He was not only allergic to mauve, he

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intensely disliked the " pastelly " type of woman who was addicted to mauve.

" Certainly we can have a committee," he said rather sharply. " But we haven't got to the point of deciding what we do want. We are merely trying to decide what we don't want, and I suggest that what we don't want is something that looks like a recreation ground for the welfare of the proletariat."

" Mrs. Cranwell and I," Mrs. Crewe informed him frigidly, " are actively concerned with the welfare of the proletariat."

" Then I beg your pardon. But I dare say that even you would object to having the gardener as dictator, and that appears to be our situation at present."

In the awkward silence that followed the Colonel turned to the lady whose name he couldn't remember.

" Now, Miss Starling." (Her name was, in fact, Spurwing). " You haven't said anything yet. What do you think we ought to do ? "

" I think we ought to do as Colonel Rumboldt suggests," Miss Spurwing answered quietly. " It's very kind of him to take so much trouble."

That settled the matter, but not quite in the way that was intended. The next morning the Colonel interviewed the gardener. The gardener immediately gave notice to the mortgagees. The mortgagees wrote to the Colonel requesting that any suggestions for the improvement of the garden should be made to them. The Colonel fumed. The gardener planted out more lobelia and alyssum and stayed on.

In spite of this discouraging start the tenants gallantly went on with the attempt to show the communal spirit. Bridge was arranged in the salon two nights later. Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Cranwell played the Vienna system while the Colonel and Mrs. Rumboldt played the Two Club with variations of their own and Mr. Baldock watched and made unnecessary comments. Two nights of this was enough to persuade everyone concerned that the easiest way to go on loving one's neighbour was not to see too much of him, and certainly not to play bridge.

A warm spell provided a convenient excuse for abandoning the club life of the salon and the tenants now dragged deck chairs about the garden trying to find seclusion without being too ostentatious about it.

Fortunately the garden was full of secluded corners. It was laid out as a kind of grid with carefully clipped yew hedges criss-crossing at right angles. These hedges were three feet thick and nearly six feet high so that no one could see either through them or over them.

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On the other hand it was soon discovered that they could hear what was being said behind them. Or, at least, they could nearly hear. That was really the trouble. No sooner, for instance, would the Colonel put his chair in the lowest rung, squeeze himself into it and close his eyes than there would be the soft sound of female voices behind the yew hedge. It was a maddening sound, like a tap dripping and the Colonel did his best not to listen. But then he would hear, or imagine he heard, his own name mentioned, or perhaps his wife's; and then of course he would strain every nerve to make out what was being said. And the same thing would be happening elsewhere in a different part of the garden. Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Cranwell would be comfortably settled with their embroidery when Mrs. Baldock would start a running commentary on the other side of the yew hedge with atmospherics provided by her husband. And although Mrs. Baldock did her best to be discreet, her comments were always of a highly apt and personal nature.

The only person who never offended in this way was the single lady who was known variously as Miss Starling, Sterling, Sturgeon and Spurling. But that was simply because she had no one to talk to. The other tenants had pitied her for that reason; but she seemed quite happy by herself, and besides they all felt she had let them down. The cold war with the gardener had continued. To everyone else he was a sulky figure walking slowly away when they came near. But this didn't happen with Miss Spurwing. He touched his cap when she came up to him; and when she gave him some zinnias to sow, he not only sowed them, but put them where she wanted them to be.

This was the situation six weeks later when the workmen moved out of the East Wing and the tenants moved in. These consisted of a Major and Mrs. Ward, a Mr. and Mrs. Bollinger, Mr. and Mrs. Potter, and a Mrs. Bramshott and a Miss Raven. They too went through the short period of the mass honeymoon, the sherries in the salon, the bridge, and the attempt to gain control of the garden. The disillusioned inhabitants of the West Wing held out an occasional helping hand, but on the whole just watched sardonically. They had been through it; and the things that had been said or almost said behind the yew hedges had already destroyed their belief in the better side of human nature.

The problem of the yew hedges had been partially solved for a time by the use of the discreet cough. When any conversation started up behind a hedge the unwilling eavesdropper would clear the throat gently but firmly as a warning. This generally had the desired effect; but not always. Sometimes the talkers just moved farther away and the eavesdropper was obliged to move, too, if he

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wanted to know what was being said or, what was more important, who was saying it.

At first the Colonel had been pretty sure that it was Mrs. Baldock who dropped the scandalous remarks. For a time his suspicions were diverted to Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Cranwell; but then again they returned to Mrs. Baldock and he was quite sure it was Mrs. Baldock the afternoon he heard the voice say:

"But my dear, don't you know, he had to leave the Army. Embezzled the regimental funds."

The Colonel was in an uncompromising mood. He hurtled out of his seat, dashed round the yew hedge, and found nothing there but an empty deck chair. The deck chair was warm as though it had recently been sat in. On the other hand it was by itself. Surely nobody, not even Mrs. Baldock, would make slanderous statements aloud to herself in a communal garden?

The Colonel no doubt would have calmed down, but at that moment Mr. Baldock arrived round the corner dragging a deck chair.

"Hullo!" he said cheerfully. "Seen my wife anywhere?"

This was sufficient proof to the Colonel that it *was* Mrs. Baldock who had occupied the warm chair.

"No," he answered furiously. "I have not. But I have heard her. And I am warning you, Mr. Baldock, that unless you can control your wife's tongue you'll have a suit for libel on your hands."

Mr. Baldock threw his deck chair down on the grass.

"Well, of all the damned nonsense!" he retorted loudly. "I haven't the faintest idea what you are talking about, but I suggest that it is you who should take steps to control your own wife's tongue. Mrs. Cranwell was complaining about what she said only the other day. It was I who dissuaded her from taking immediate action."

"How dare you, sir. My wife . . ."

At this point the new tenant of the East Wing, Major Ward, came hurrying round the yew hedge. "Gentlemen, please, gentlemen! I couldn't help hearing what was being said."

"Then perhaps," the Colonel fumed, "you also heard what was said a moment before. That somebody had to leave the Army because he embezzled the regimental funds."

The Major became very hot under the collar.

"Really, sir, if you're suggesting . . ."

"I am suggesting," the Colonel retorted, "that you mind your own business. As for you, sir," he turned to Mr. Baldock, "I am ready to accept a written apology, otherwise I shall consult my solicitors."

This incident did nothing to localize the conflict. The cold war

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had become a warm war and had spread to the new tenants in the East Wing. They referred to the earlier inhabitants as "those dreadful people in the West Wing," and the Major, who had reason to be touchy about his Army career, was already consulting his solicitors. All that was now required to blow the whole thing up was something to set the husbands against the wives and the wives against the husbands. This was provided four days later when Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Cranwell were doing their embroidery behind a yew hedge and refraining from talking about anybody or anything. Suddenly there was a scuffle on the other side of the hedge and Miss Spurwing was heard to exclaim. "No, no! How dare you! Go away at once!"

Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Cranwell hurried round to give any aid that might be required. But none was required. Miss Spurwing just walked straight past them looking very pink in the face and all their subsequent efforts to get her to say what had happened and who it was were unavailing. That left all five male tenants under suspicion, and their wives seemed unsatisfied with the various alibis they produced. Both the Colonel and Mr. Baldock argued that it must have been Major Ward or one of the other two men in the East Wing; for if they had been going to do any such thing themselves they would have done it much earlier. But that argument did little to please their wives or to improve relations with the East Wing.

The tension was now so great that no one dragged deck chairs into the garden. The gardener had it all to himself: that is, he did until one hot morning in August when two bowler-hatted gentlemen appeared amongst the yew hedges. One had a writ to serve on the Colonel's behalf against Mr. Baldock and the other had a writ to serve on Major Ward's behalf against the Colonel. It was that morning that most of the tenants decided to take advantage of the break in their leases.

By the beginning of November the mortgagees had seven empty flats on their hands and there wasn't a nibble for a single one of them from the house agent. They would indeed have been much happier if they had had eight empty flats on their hands instead of seven; but Miss Spurwing showed every intention of remaining for the full period of her seven-year lease. She said she was very happy and comfortable there.

Miss Spurwing had never paused to wonder how much the gardener knew; but one crisp autumnal day, when the blue smoke of burning leaves was rising behind the hedges, she walked round the border where the zinnias had been and found him busy digging.

He straightened up and touched his cap as she came near.

"Morning, Todd," she began. "It's a lovely day again."

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" It is a fine day," he agreed. " Kind of peaceful now, too, with the place to ourselves."

" You'll be staying on, I hope, Todd."

" Oh, I'll be staying, Miss : just as long as you are."

Miss Spurwing gave him a quick look but said nothing. There was a slight pause, then the gardener leaned against his spade and gazed at her. " How did ye learn to do it, Miss ? "

" Do what ? " Miss Spurwing stared at him.

" Why, speak with other people's voices from behind the hedges."

Miss Spurwing decided that it was no good lying.

" Oh, I was always a very good mimic," she answered. " I could do all the teachers when I was at school."

" It was wonderful well done, Miss, if I may say so. I'd never have believed it unless I'd seen you at it."

" Did you tell anyone about it, Todd ? "

" No, I wouldn't tell on you, Miss. I wanted them all out of the way just as much as you did. Townspeople like that ! They weren't the kind for Gandergoose Park."

Miss Spurwing looked at him more closely.

" Do you think that I'm the kind for it, Todd ? "

" Yes, you're the kind all right, Miss. Why, you might have been a Gander yourself. You've got the eyes and the manner of speaking."

" How on earth do you know that ? "

" Because there was a Todd here in the garden as long as there was a Gander in the house. The Todds have been clipping those yew hedges for two or three hundred years."

" Ever since the time of Sir Miles ? "

" That's right, Miss. It was a bad day for the Todds when the Ganders left." Miss Spurwing smiled and watched the blue smoke curling into the sky for a moment.

" Well, I *am* a Gander, Todd," she told him finally. " The very last of them, I believe. I'd always promised myself that some day, somehow, I was going to come back. I'd have bought the place if I'd had the money ; but as I hadn't, I had to find another way. And here I am ! "

The gardener dug three spadefuls of rich black earth.

" Yes, here we are," he agreed. " And here, some way or another, we're going to stay ! "

* * *

Candy is dandy,
But liquor is quicker.

OGDEN NASH

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EXPRESS TO ROMANCE

I began to hate the dark girl for being so superbly Spanish—and for belonging to someone else

by BRUCE MARSHALL

TRAVELLING in Spain isn't easy these days, and the day express from Barcelona to Madrid runs only three times a week and stops at all intermediate stations. Although I had managed to bribe my way into the possession of a reserved seat I was down at the station early in case a rival claimant might have paid a higher price. The outsides of the wooden coaches were filthy and the first-class coach seemed no cleaner than the rest. Although the station was dark the carriages weren't lighted. There was nobody in my compartment when I arrived and I settled down in my corner, prepared for fifteen grim hours of travel.

The first two passengers to arrive in my compartment were a nondescript middle-aged couple such as one meets in every train in the world. The man had an unhappy, legal-looking face and the woman was button-nosed and dumpy. The husband spent a long time arranging their luggage on the rack and then they both went out and stood in the corridor, mooning out at the platform and blocking the entry of other passengers.

A young man and a young woman were the next to arrive. The man was stocky and had a plump commercial sort of face and the girl was tall and thin. Even in the half light it was impossible not to see that she was beautiful. With her dark hair falling silkily against her long pale face she was the classic lovely woman of Spain and might have posed for one of Goya's very human angels. The unchanging centuries of Castille glowed in her eyes. She wore a black coat open down the front to show a white dress underneath. I wondered how so entrancing a creature could possibly be in love with the podgy young man.

For as the daylight filtered into the smoky station it became clear that they were lovers. They sat holding hands and staring into each other's eyes with that gluey look which is always so irritating to a non-participant. Soon their heads were together and they were whispering. I always find this practice annoying because I am never sure that the whisperers aren't making unkind remarks

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about my personal appearance, about which I am not too confident.

Five minutes before the train was due to leave, an old lady arrived to take the last vacant seat in the compartment, opposite me. Her face was wrinkled and pouchy and she was enveloped in shapeless clothes. She wore a battered red hat, set precariously on her white hair and tilted forward on to her forehead. She gave the porter very precise instructions about her luggage and asked at what time the train would arrive in Madrid.

"At eleven o'clock tonight," the porter said. "That is to say, if nothing unforeseen happens."

"On this line something unforeseen always happens," the old lady said and closed her eyes.

To my surprise the train started on time, at eight o'clock punctually. Now that it was no longer possible to block the passage of incoming passengers by standing in the corridor the middle-aged couple came back into the compartment and sat down. But they didn't hold hands or whisper in each other's ears. Habit and grocers' bills had done their work. Love had flown out of the window long ago and if the window hadn't been open love would have smashed the glass.

The young couple were still holding hands as the train rode out through the suburbs of Barcelona. The white houses were bright in the early morning sun. Although many of the buildings were ugly a hint of mystery hung over them, like a mantilla softening the features of a plain woman. Even the signal-boxes looked ecclesiastical, and the grass growing up between and over the mouldy sleepers seemed to express the ghostly protest of Don Quixote de la Mancha that mechanical transport should ever have been introduced into Spain.

The girl was even more lovely in the daylight than she had been in the semi-darkness of the station. On her lips and in her eyes there was that gravity which so often distinguishes Castilians from other Latins. Even when she gazed with foolish tenderness into the blobby little face of her companion the austerities of her forefathers laid their shadow upon her and made her noble.

The girl's beauty threw a gloom upon me, perhaps because it was, as far as I was concerned, so absolutely unattainable. I had in my pocket introductions to several Spanish families in Madrid but I guessed that none of their daughters would look as lovely as the dark girl sitting almost opposite me in the candour of her white frock.

To make my sadness virile I began to hate the mean-looking little man who was holding her hand, and when they started whispering again I extended my hatred to the girl as well, for

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being so superbly Spanish and for belonging so obviously to somebody else.

It is, of course, a common occurrence for fellow travellers on a long railway journey to start out loathing one another like poison and to arrive at their destination almost intimate friends. Nothing like this seemed likely to happen with our group, however. The lovers were too absorbed in each other to have time for anybody else. The middle-aged couple were drearily comparing the price of eggs in Bilbao with the price of eggs in Valencia. And the old lady kept annoying everybody else by pottering in and out of the compartment and making them change the position of their feet.

To draw my eyes away from the girl I looked out of the window. The train was now running through a green and yellow land. The mountains in the distance looked old and lonely, like the backs of overworked horses. Trees grew up the sides of the hills, on tiny cliffs of sandy rocks. The sun threw silver lights on the leaves of the trees and made them shine as though they were wet. It was all very grand and majestic and holy with time, but I couldn't enjoy it as I ought to have done, because of the dark exciting girl sitting so near me and making love to that little nonentity.

I was still in a bad temper when I went into the dining-car for lunch. On my way I passed the old lady, promenading up and down the corridor and peering into every compartment. I sat down at a small table at which I hoped to be able to brood in solitude. When I looked up from my inspection of the menu I saw the old lady coming through the doorway.

Because I did not desire her company I pretended not to see her and looked out of the window at the passing countryside. The hills were still bare and gaunt, but the train was now running alongside a river. The water of the river was pale green because trees grew along the banks and the sun threw the cool colour of the leaves upon the water. When I looked up I found to my annoyance that the old lady had seated herself opposite me. I did not give her a smile of recognition because I knew from experience how garrulous old ladies in trains could be.

Why her silly red hat did not slide off her head into the soup I soon gave up trying to understand. I was pouring out my wine when the train lurched and sent a jet of red liquid shooting over to the old lady's side of the table-cloth.

"Disculpeme, Señora," I said, annoyed and shameful.

"It is not your fault," the old lady replied in unexpected English. "It is the fault of the wide Spanish gauge." She mopped up the wine stains with her napkin and I helped her rather superfluously, because the old lady was much better at mopping than I

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was. "I rather think that the waiters are too busy for us to bother them by asking them to change the table-cloth."

The old lady's English was stilted and careful, but there was nothing unnatural about her smile. Her smile lit her wrinkled face and made it friendly and beautiful and her tired old eyes became bright and shining.

"It was clumsy of me," I said. "I am so very sorry."

"I think that I am beginning to change my opinion about you," the old lady said. "At first when I saw you frowning at those lovers in our compartment I thought that you were hard-hearted and unnatural. Now I am beginning to believe that you are only jealous. One should never think unkind thoughts about lovers, especially in railway trains."

"Why especially in railway trains?"

"I do not see why I should not tell you," the old lady said after a minute's reflection. "If I knew you in Madrid or in Barcelona I should certainly not tell you. But a fellow traveller on a long train journey whom one will never see again is like a priest in the confessional: you can speak to him without fear of what he is going to think about you afterwards."

"You make it sound very mysterious," I said.

"The only mystery about it is the mystery of nature which patiently, invisibly and sometimes, I think, perversely transforms a beautiful young girl into an ugly old woman. Your poet Robert Herrick has written about that, I believe."

I quoted:

> "*Be you not proud of that rich hair*
> *Which wantons with the love-sick air;*
> *Whenas that ruby which you wear,*
> *Sunk from the tip of your soft ear,*
> *Will last to be a precious stone*
> *When all your world of beauty's gone.*"

"Those are the words of which I was thinking," the old lady said. "Fifty years ago I was as young and as beautiful and as apparently indestructible as that girl in our compartment. I can imagine that you find it difficult to believe that."

It is always awkward for the young when the old talk frankly of their age. One feels foolish when one lies glibly about death still being a long way off and yet one does not like it to be seen that one is fully aware of the approach of their disintegration.

"Not at all," I said limply. "There is a kind of beauty that increases with the years."

"You are thinking of holy people and philosophers," the old lady said. "I am neither a holy person nor a philosopher. When I

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was young I had, as the Spanish say, birds in my head, and so I cannot hope to have great dignity of appearance now. But when I used to make this journey from Barcelona to Madrid with my parents, the men all used to look at me and try to find excuses for getting into conversation with me."

"Did any of them ever think of spilling wine on your part of the table-cloth?" I asked.

"One of them thought of something even better," the old lady said when she had finished laughing. "It's about that I want to tell you. Of course, it all happened a long time ago, during the regency of Maria Cristina."

I hadn't the slightest idea when the regency of Maria Cristina had been, but I found it easy enough to believe in it as the train trundled along between the rocky escarpments. On a dry island of stones in the middle of the river a man was driving in front of him a flock of black and white goats, and it was not difficult to imagine that they, too, had been there in the regency of Maria Cristina. I took a draught of the rough Spanish wine and prepared to listen to the old lady.

"I was travelling with my parents and my fiancé, or my novio as we say in Spanish. My parents were rigid and stupid but they loved me and I was happy to be their daughter. My novio was rigid and stupid and not very handsome and I was not happy to be his novia. But at that time in Spain the marriages of young people were arranged by their elders for reasons of interest and of caste, and in the majority of cases it was not altogether a bad system."

"One has got to have something to talk about in the lulls of love," I said. "That's where a community of interests becomes necessary."

"But there is also the very important period of love itself." As the old lady said this she smiled so sweetly that all the wrinkles vanished from her face and I thought that I saw how she had looked as a girl in a white dress and a pretty hat that sat brightly on her head, in the regency of Maria Cristina. "Anyway when I was travelling in that train it was one of the lulls of love and although our parents had bank accounts of similar size my novio and I had nothing to talk about. Engagements in Spain count as a lull in love or the quiet before the storm. And as I sat looking at my novio with his foolish empty eyes I began to be afraid that there was never going to be any storm."

"Surely you could have held hands," I ventured.

"During the regency of Maria Cristina engaged couples were not allowed to hold hands. If you were caught doing so they called out the fire brigade and the engagement was broken. And what

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was worse I had no wish to hold hands with my novio, even although both our families owned shares in the Ferrocarriles del Norte.

"But I should not have minded holding hands with the young Englishman who was also in our compartment. He had fair hair and smiling blue eyes. In all my life I had never seen a young man as beautiful as he was.

"And it was not long before I saw that the young Englishman would not have minded holding hands with me. When he thought that my parents and my novio weren't looking he gave me what I think you call in English the happy eye. And once he even winked at me. Like this." Beneath her silly red hat the old lady closed and opened her eye grotesquely. "And when I was sure that neither my parents nor my novio were looking I winked back. I suppose that it was very forward of me, but I liked him so much and I was afraid that I should never see such a handsome young man again.

"There were seven of us in the compartment: my parents, my novio, myself, two business men and the handsome young man. After lunch it became very hot and my parents fell asleep. Soon the business men and my novio fell asleep too and when my novio was asleep he looked so stupid and ugly that I was sure that I could never marry him and be happy.

"My father and mother were sitting in corner seats opposite each other and I was sitting next to my mother, with my novio opposite me. Next to me was seated the handsome young Englishman. As soon as I saw that all the others were asleep I turned to look at him and saw that he was already looking at me and smiling ever so gently.

"Then slowly his hand crept towards mine, but first it touched only my dress, because I think that the young man was shy. Soon I began to touch my dress too and slowly our hands moved closer until they met. The contact was so delicious that I gasped aloud. At that moment my novio opened his eyes.

"I think that I must have withdrawn my hand before my novio saw it in the Englishman's, but the young man was so intent on gazing into my eyes that he did not see that my novio was watching him. 'Are you very hot?' he tried to ask me in faulty Spanish, but his Spanish was even more faulty than it need have been because he used the wrong phrase and asked me instead if I was very passionate. And my novio heard him." The old lady laughed delightedly at the memory. "You should have seen my novio's face. I do not think that I have ever seen anybody look more startled."

"Foreign languages are full of traps for the unwary," I said rather sententiously.

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" At first I was startled too, because he had seemed to me to be such a nice young man, but my novio was more than startled: he was very angry. He woke my parents and told them that the young Englishman had insulted me and that he was going to challenge him to a duel. My father and mother both joined in abusing the young man and said that they would call the police when the train stopped at Saragossa.

" The noise wakened the two business men and when they learned what had happened they wanted to pull the alarm signal and have the young man put off the train immediately. At first it only seemed to make matters worse when they discovered that the young man was English, because it made them remember the Spanish Armada.

" It was I who found out that the phrase which the young Englishman had addressed to me was the only Spanish he knew: he had been taught it by a jester in Barcelona who had told him that it was a suitable sentence to address to young women when the sun was shining strongly.

" My parents and the two business men accepted this explanation readily enough although my novio took a little more convincing. In the end, however, we all became friends and we all laughed together as the difference between ' Tiene usted calor ? ' and the wrong phrase which had caused the trouble was explained to the Englishman over and over again. It was difficult to do this, of course, because none of us Spaniards knew any English."

There were now no more trees growing at the edge of the river. The water of the river was blue beneath the stillness of the sky, and white here and there where there was the ruffle of rapids. We had finished our lunch and, sensing that the old lady had not yet come to the end of her story, I was waiting for her to continue. Just then, however, the young lovers from our compartment entered the dining-car and sat down at the table next to ours. Tears gathered slowly in the old lady's eyes and as she dabbed at them with her handkerchief she said:

" Now it is my turn to be stupid and jealous. But I have more excuse than you. For you there will one day be the right young woman, beautiful and tender, but for me life is over and there can be no turning back to begin again. I thought that when I was old I should not mind but I find that I mind very much indeed."

Although I was sure that there was more to come of the old lady's story I did not like to ask her to tell it to me because of her grief.

When we got back to our compartment the middle-aged couple had gone and their place had been taken by a priest and a woman

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with a small girl on her knee. Every time the train stopped at a station the priest consulted a time-table and told us how late the train was. To relieve the mother I took the little girl on my lap and she told me that she was six years old and that her name was Manolita. I wondered for how long she would be happy in life as she slowly turned into a pretty young woman and then faded into a tired old lady wearing an unfashionable hat. And at the end of it all, the bare hills of Spain would still lie patiently beneath the sun.

All the afternoon the old lady slept in her corner or went out on her mysterious journeys in the corridor.

The sun was setting when I returned to the dining-car for dinner. Once again the old lady sat opposite me, holding the menu close to her pouched, wrinkled face. The evening light lay softly on the fields, in streams of gold, and the slopes of the hills were red, deepening slowly to purple.

" I did not tell you the end of my story," the old lady said as we began our meal. " When the difference between the two phrases had been explained to the young Englishman, my parents and the business men and my novio fell asleep again.

" But the young Englishman did not fall asleep and I did not fall asleep either. All the afternoon he sat gazing at me with love shining in his eyes and I suppose that I must have had something very like love shining in my eyes too because I thought him so handsome. And I could not help feeling how foolish were the conventions of the world which forbade the possibility of snatching at happiness to young people, unless their parents were acquainted or some indifferent person, who by chance knew them both, were there to introduce them.

" Then suddenly my novio opened his eyes again, and I do not know if he saw the sad look on my face but he must certainly have thought that I was overcome by the heat. ' Tiene usted calor ? ' he asked, which of course was the right phrase. Immediately the young Englishman set upon him, punching his face and hitting him hard all over his body. I was so surprised that it was some time before I grasped the misunderstanding which had provoked his anger. He kept shouting at my novio in English, but I did not understand any English.

" My novio was not a very good fighter, and it was not long before the Englishman had hurt him a great deal. And he would have hurt him still more if my parents and the others in the compartment had not pulled him off."

Outside the night was falling. The clouds were a pink reddish brown and looked as though they were on fire. Dark blue shadows were softening the hills.

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"And you?" I asked. "Did you not try to prevent the Englishman from hitting your novio?"

The old lady shook her head.

"I am afraid that in those days I was a very wicked young woman. Well, this time explanations were even more difficult. My parents and the other people in the compartment wanted to call the guard and have the young man arrested at the next station. Once more I came to the rescue. I said that in spite of our explanations the young man must still have got the phrases mixed up and had thought that my novio was insulting me when he had asked me if I was suffering from the heat."

"And had he really got the phrases mixed up?" I asked.

"That is a question which I have often asked myself," the old lady replied with a roguish twinkle in her eye. "All I know is that he stood there repeating the two Spanish phrases and stupidly shaking his head. In the end my parents accepted this explanation, perhaps a little because of the zeal with which he had helped to lay my novio out along the carriage seat.

"For my novio had been hit so hard that he could no longer sit up. The Englishman gave up his seat of course, and so as not to disturb my parents I gave up mine. And when we had made my novio comfortable we both went and stood in the corridor as we couldn't very well stand in the middle of the compartment. The sun was setting as it is now and soon it was so dark that we could scarcely see each other's faces. In the regency of Maria Cristina trains in Spain were very rarely lighted."

"Lente currite, noctis equi," I quoted, scarcely expecting the old lady to understand. But the old lady did.

"It wasn't only the horses of the night that I wanted to run slowly," she said, surprising me by her knowledge of Ovid. "Even Spanish trains in the regency of Maria Cristina ran faster than the horses of the night and I knew that it would not be long before we reached Madrid. I also knew that once we reached Madrid I should never see the beautiful young Englishman again.

"Once more I cursed the foolish conventions of society that made it almost impossible for Spanish girls to marry or even to meet the men who pleased them. And then the horses of the night not only ran slowly: they also ran close together. Once more our hands touched. 'Yo te quiero,' I gasped before I knew what I had said. 'I love you.' Yes, I, Maria Josefina Carmela Mantera, told a strange young man that I loved him.

"At first my shame was so great that I was glad when he did not seem to understand. His face was close to mine in the darkness, but I knew that he had not understood or he would have kissed me. Then my shame turned slowly to consternation because I wanted

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him to understand. 'Yo te quiero,' I said again. 'Entiendes, hombre? Yo te quiero.'"

It was now quite dark outside and the hills were lost in the night, but I was too busy watching the old lady to notice much. Once more the wrinkles had gone from her face and I saw her again as she must have been, dark-haired, bright-eyed and in a pretty dress. The mean years which the world had known since had vanished. We were back in the regency of Maria Cristina, with fans and shawls and high combs tracing a pattern of dignity and leisure.

"Although I said the words many times he did not understand," the old lady said. There was anxiety in her voice and in her eyes as though she were living her uncertainties again for the first time. Then her eyes sparkled and her whole face was lighted with laughter. "And then I did a dreadful thing. I said the only Spanish sentence which he seemed to know, the words which a friend had taught him for a joke. 'I'm passionate,' I said, and in case he should get the meaning mixed up again and open the window to give me air I threw myself into his arms and kissed him on the lips. I think that I must have been the first young woman in Spain to have done such a thing."

I did not laugh. I did not even smile. What the old lady had said was all so real. Her hat was no longer ridiculous but a symbol of what life does to all of us in the long run. And then she was weeping again, in great gulps of sorrow this time, and it was many minutes before she could speak.

"To this day I do not know whether he understood properly because we had just time to separate before my parents came out and called me back into the compartment," the old lady said. "After we reached Madrid I never saw the young Englishman again. Three months later I married my novio."

"And were you happy with him?"

"As happy as the world allows women to be when they are not in love with their husbands. But that is unkind of me. My husband has been dead for more than twenty years now and I pray that God may rest his soul." She was silent for a little before she continued: "Perhaps you are wondering why I have told you this. It is because I do not wish that you should any more frown at lovers. Their love is fragile and so many things may happen to break it. Fifty years ago this very day that all happened."

"Then this is a pilgrimage?" I asked and sought for a phrase. "A candle lighted to a memory?"

The old lady nodded and smiled sadly.

"It is that and it is something even more foolish," she said. "It is also a hope. For more than fifteen years now I have made this journey on this day. Please do not laugh at me."

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I understood without being told any more, and the absurdity of it made me sad. So that was the reason for her frequent journeys up and down the corridors. And it was probably because of this wild hope that she had learned such perfect English.

"But are you sure that you would still be able to recognize him?" I asked.

"Anywhere and any time," the old lady answered with conviction.

The engine had broken down by the time we returned to our compartment. The feeble electric lights were dimming. The priest sat trying to calculate how late we should be by the time we reached Madrid and the lovers were blotted against each other in the deepening darkness. I took Manolita on my knee again and stroked her hair but it was not of her that I was thinking. I was wondering why an old man in England had never thought of searching in a Spanish train for the ghost of a happiness which might have been.

"I think I know what you are thinking," the old lady said in English from her corner. "But passion is not the only thing there is to love."

Soon the lights went out altogether. For me the compartment was full of the whisper of old-fashioned dresses as we sat in the darkness waiting for another engine to be sent up from Guadalajara to pull us into Madrid.

* * *

NEW LOOK!

Dining one night with the Prince and Princess of Wales, later King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, Lady Dalhousie, wife of the 13th Earl, appeared in the plainest of evening dresses, without the customary accessories of jewels, flowers, ribbons and fans.

"How lovely!" commented the Princess. Lady Dalhousie's style became extremely fashionable.

Some months later Lady Dalhousie was again invited to dine with the Prince and Princess. This time, in contrast to the other plainly dressed guests, she wore a gorgeous robe of gold brocade glittering with diamonds.

The Prince walked up to her. "Naughty," he said.

PETERBOROUGH *in The Daily Telegraph*

When you have finished reading this copy of ARGOSY, *why not pass it on to a member of H.M. Forces?*

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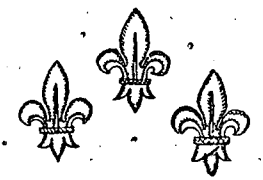
Ballade



Written by Villon for Robert d'Estouteville,
that he might give it to his Bride, won by the Sword

AT break of day, when falcons sport
For pleasure, and by noble right;
With loud glad noise and joyous gambollings
The male draws to his mate and takes her in his might.
This do I offer you, as desire doth blind my sight
For this is joy of which all things make free,
As Love has noted, in his book to write;
And for this end we now together be.

Lady, in my heart you'll be from now,
Wholly, till Death holds me below;
Like laurel for my rightful victor's brow
Or olive to console me from life's woe.
Rest certain, dear, full proof of this I'll show
And in this thou hast now been joined with me;
Nor will I fail, but in my service grow
And for this end we now together be.

And what is more, though by hard fate I stumble
And Fortune's anger barbed darts doth throw;
Your quiet, proud eye her malice then will humble,
Dispersing it, as wind the smoke doth blow.
Well blessed be the seed that now I sow
Within thy field, for the fruit resembleth me;
God bids me tend it, a fair land to show
And for this end we two together be.

Princess, take these my last words few;
Of you my heart shall not be free
While life remains. Like faith I put in you,
And for this end we two together be.

Translated by BARRY JOYNSON CORK

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THE GADDING VINE

Madame Delage had set her heart upon a magnificent bunch which hung on the south wall

by GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

WE, the French—said Maître Braillard, stretching his feet under the table and swallowing a draught of the acid white wine which was all the café had in 1946 to offer—are ever ready to accept tradition. I speak to you as a lawyer and perhaps I exaggerate. But in my opinion the worst that the Occupation did to us was to destroy our sense of continuity with the past.

This wine is revolting, but will do while we wait for better. And I assure you that within two years the tradition of the Gallic palate will have triumphed.

It is customary—he went on—to prophesy that the revolution we are undoubtedly about to suffer will be more drastic than our revolution one hundred and fifty years ago. I do not believe it. We wish to order our lives by the law. We accept immediately the law. It is only when we know not what the law is that we become a little difficult.

I will tell you a story. It has a slight piggery, but we are after dinner—if indeed we may dignify by the name the small portions of antique horse and salad that we have just consumed.

Do you know the municipality of Saint-Valery-sur-Marne? No? I am not surprised. Saint-Valery is ten kilometres from the fortifications and remarkable only for its ugliness and its extensive railroad yard. If you travel round Paris from the Gare du Nord to the Quai d'Orsay, your train will inevitably pass through Saint-Valery. But why should you be in it? You will of course spend some hours in Paris, and will pick up your train again at the Quai d'Orsay.

Saint-Valery has a black canal, and some small industries without any permanence built of cement and corrugated iron. There is no architecture. There are only hoardings, and houses of a startling melancholy. It is quite evident that one is compelled to inhabit Saint-Valery; one does not choose it.

In the middle of this tasteless wilderness are the railroad tracks, and in the middle of the tracks is a little tower of dirty brick. The

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tower is old. I do not know how old, nor what it was for ; it might have been the base of a round dovecot. But now the interior has been rearranged—you understand—as a convenience for railwaymen.

It stood, this tower, upon a triangle of blackened gravel between the canal sidings and the main loop-line round Paris. In spite of this little-promising situation, the brickwork was covered by a resplendent vine. There was no other green thing within three hundred metres ; not even a dandelion could live in such a waste of steel and cinders. But the vine was older than the railroad, and its roots were far down in good French soil. It was well nourished by the iron that filtered in solution through the gravel and had, no doubt, some other excellent sources of fertility.

In August of 1945 the vine was superb. It rejoiced in its liberation. The walls and parapet of the tower were jewelled with bunches as long as my forearm. The grapes were of that indescribable tint which is purple, yet not quite purple. All the station staff of Saint-Valery were agreed that it needed but twenty-four more August hours for fifty bunches to be at their perfection.

Mme. Delage, who was the wife of the station-master and impatient for good morsels as befitted an admirable housekeeper who was tormented by the impossibility of a decent table, was the first to lose her self-restraint. One had not yet decided upon the ultimate destiny of the grapes ; one had perhaps deliberately avoided so delicate a subject. Mme. Delage, however, had set her heart upon a bunch, already and indubitably ripe, which hung on the south wall immediately above the window of the tower.

I knew her well. She had a black moustache, and her rotundities, though massive, were more square than round. She had no reason to hope for those attentions which traditionally await the wives of station-masters. She wore high-heeled shoes, as was proper for the consort of an important functionary, but they did not become her ankles. She resembled, I thought, a hippopotamus on skates. Nevertheless, M. Delage was a model husband. She had fine brown eyes, one must admit, and then he was very afraid of her.

At six in the morning Mme. Delage, with a basket and a pair of scissors, waited before the door of the tower. I say she waited, for the tower was occupied ; and she could only reach the chosen bunch through the window from the inside. After a while she permitted herself to hammer on the door.

This intemperate gesture being without effect, she approached Lulu, who was waiting on the track, and climbed upon her footplate and blew her whistle loudly. It was Charles Cortal, the driver, who had christened his locomotive Lulu. He loved little else but Lulu and all humanity, for he was a communist. But humanity is too large to love with enthusiasm. His true affection was for Lulu.

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Charles Cortal launched himself in a fury from the tower.

" Madame ! " he cried. " It is forbidden by the regulations of the company to climb upon a locomotive ! "

" It is also forbidden," Madame replied, " to leave a locomotive unattended."

I was not present, you understand, but I can imagine what Cortal retorted. I have had dealings with him. He answered, with a beautiful selection of obscenities, that there were times when locomotives had to be left, above all when his cretinous fireman had gone to pour coffee into his miserable guts, and that if he had known Madame so urgently required the tower he would have made other arrangements.

To this Madame replied, with the exasperating calm in which she was accustomed to address the angry proletariat, that he knew very well she desired only to gather a bunch of grapes.

" Then gather them, nom de Dieu ! " shouted Charles Cortal. " But without disturbing me ! "

" One can reach the grapes only from the inside," answered Madame.

She was, you will agree, in the wrong. And to Cortal she exhibited plainly, immediately, the shocking inhumanity and acquisitiveness of the bourgeoisie. He therefore demanded why Madame should gather grapes which had been the property of the company's drivers and firemen as long as the Third Republic existed. Then Madame began to tell him what she thought of this right he had so brilliantly invented. And Cortal said that for one old cow she made more noise than a whole veterinary surgeon's backyard.

And patati, patata ! And before anyone knew of the quarrel, Mme. Delage was off to swear a procès-verbal against Cortal for insult and contumely, and Cortal had gone to complain to the local secretary of the union.

Meanwhile Lulu remained where she was as a protest. M. Delage and the signalman might say what they liked, but not a driver would move her. The loop-line was blocked, and on the telephone from Paris were jolly things to be heard.

After a hasty breakfast, M. Delage placed upon his head the gold-braided hat of office and visited the Café de la Gare, where Charles Cortal was expressing his opinions over a glass of very bad eau de vie. Before them all Delage accused Cortal of sabotaging the transport system of France. Cortal, without hesitating an instant, called him a collaborator, a Petainiste, and a pro-Boche. After that there was no more to be said.

M. Delage was a man of duty. It was his business to see that trains ran, and he saw that they did run, even during the Occupation.

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He did not understand the Resistance; he was paid, he said, by the company. All the same, he looked the other way when it was required of him, and he kept his mouth closed. I would never call him a collaborator, but he was narrow.

At midday arrived from Paris the general secretary of the union. He was a reasonable man. True, he had the hungry and farouche appearance of a revolutionary assassin; but it was expressly cultivated. In manner he was tactful as a director of funerals. Though his sympathies were naturally with Cortal, he was determined to restore discipline at Saint-Valery.

After he had wholly failed with the drivers and firemen, he took it upon himself to make Delage laugh at this petty affair—as between men of the world, you understand. But Delage was in no laughing mood; there was, he said, a question of principle involved. He pulled out the railroad regulations and made the secretary read the powers of the station-master: how he was responsible to the company for all property, movable and immovable, in or upon the station and the yards, and in the event of any attempt upon such property might call upon the civil power—and so on.

Delage was prepared to admit that he might have no right to eat the grapes. A court of law, he said, would settle that. But as to his right or that of his wife, acting as his agent, to pick the said grapes at maturity there could be no doubt at all.

The secretary was inclined to agree, but to excuse Cortal he suggested that an overworked and honest driver, disturbed in a moment of tranquillity, might permit himself expressions which—

"Monsieur," said Delage gravely, "she waited a reasonable time."

"But Monsieur, consider the impropriety!"

"Monsieur accuses my wife of impropriety?"

"Of no such thing, I assure you. I wished to say that Madame with her delicate susceptibilities would not have desired to gather grapes had she been aware—"

"Madame is above such petty considerations. And then, I repeat, she waited a reasonable time."

"Monsieur would be good enough to define a reasonable time?" asked the secretary, who was beginning to forget his tact.

"Ah, par example! Let us say five minutes!"

"It is in the regulations, perhaps?"

"It is in the regulations that a driver shall not leave his locomotive unattended."

"When France mourns for so many missing sons," said the secretary sharply, "one cannot manage labour by red tape, especially at five a.m."

"It was six, Monsieur."

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" In any case, Monsieur, it was at a suspiciously early hour that Madame chose to sneak her grapes."

" Monsieur, I forbid any criticism of my wife ! "

To which the secretary, at last under the infectious influence of the vine and angry as lesser men, replied by a pleasantry in the poorest taste. And then M. Delage slapped his face.

They were separated by the chief clerks of the Grande Vitesse and the Petite Vitesse. Those two were invaluable. They were calm, you see. They voted for the Catholic centre and had all that was necessary to their convenience upon the station. They had thus no conceivable right to the grapes.

It was quite otherwise with the shunters. They disagreed entirely with the impulsive claim of Charles Cortal that the fruit had always been the perquisite of drivers and firemen. The shunters had just as good a case in all respects ; two of them had even pruned the vine.

The solidarity of the working-class vanished altogether when the shunter, Hippolyte Charvet, took it upon himself to remove Lulu while she still had steam. He made a speech from the foot-plate explaining that the act he was about to perform must not be interpreted as having any bearing upon the future of France, and had nothing to do with the dispute between the station-master and the locomotive engineers. In that argument the engineers were right, and Delage, the so-called station-master, was a fascist who would shortly receive his deserts. No, comrades, he removed the locomotive merely because in its present position it kept the afternoon sun from the shunters' grapes.

He thereupon returned Lulu to the sheds. I think he is still in hospital. Charles Cortal did not even permit the oiling of Lulu by any but himself.

To hear the arguments, you would have thought that every man remembered exactly what had happened before the war. Even Cortal's claim, which he had obviously invented merely because he was angry, was taken seriously. But nobody in fact remembered any tradition at all. For five years the Boche R.T.O. in charge of the yards and his Boche staff had eaten the grapes themselves and allowed no one else to approach them. That alone was certain.

I will now give you the intelligence summary for Saint-Valery at nightfall. M. Delage was prostrated, partly by answering telephone calls from Paris and partly because he feared to be shot as pro-Boche. Mme. Delage was at her lawyer's for the third time. The drivers and firemen were on strike. Charles Cortal was summoned for the attempted murder of Hippolyte Charvet. The

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shunters had a peaceful picket round the vine. Grande Vitesse was occupied in composing an apology for the union secretary, who had not the least wish in the world to fight a duel, and Petite Vitesse was doing the same for Delage. And Saint-Valery yards were just as idle as when all the employees used to pretend they heard an air-raid warning.

The next day it was hot. But how hot! Only to think of it gives me a thirst even for this wine. We descended, a horde of officials, upon Saint-Valery. I was among them, being the union's attorney. There was the under-secretary of the Ministry; there were two big men of the Resistance; there were all the union officials and the company officials. There were even some soldiers. In these days one can never have a row between civilians without soldiers desiring to be present.

First of all we held a quite informal conference at the station. We arrived at the facts. And then we protested that the whole affair was ridiculous. The Resistance men laughed. That started us off. A complainant had only to mention the tower for us to giggle like boys, all of us and uncontrollably. On a hot day one laughs easily. One's companions are themselves comical. They mop their faces. The poor railwaymen of Saint-Valery were more furious than ever.

It was Charles Cortal who imposed more gravity upon us. He mounted on a barrow and addressed the union officials.

"We," he bellowed, "we, the drivers and firemen, we were the heart of the Resistance in Saint-Valery. A month after the liberation we were thanked. And now, a year after the liberation, observe how they allow us to be stuffed up with insults from a sort of pig of a collaborator! Comrades, one steals our birthright!"

And then he called Delage by the names of various animals, and commented, without any regard for zoology, upon his probable descent from others.

This wiped the smiles off the faces of the company officials; they were about to be nationalized, and it would do no good to their salaries to have the reputation of capitalist tyrants.

Mme. Delage had dressed herself like a pretty countrywoman, but in surprisingly good taste. She chose her moment to direct a few words to the General Manager. Everybody listened.

She was going, she said quietly, in the freshness of the dawn to cull a bunch of grapes.

Our chivalry leaped to our hearts. She had a fine voice, and she made one see French Womanhood, all pure and laborious, going about its simple tasks at sunrise.

She had been insulted, she sighed, but that was nothing. There

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were gentlemen in plenty to defend a Frenchwoman in distress. No, it was not for herself that she asked justice, but for her husband.

Delage was in his best cap and uniform, looking handsome and pale and very much the old soldier. Of course she touched that string too. His service in the last war. Wounded for France. Twice mentioned. And now to be called a collaborator!

She picked up Delage's hand and kissed it passionately.

"That is what I think of him!" she cried. "And will anyone dare to say that I, Susanne Hélène Delage, am a collaborator?"

That wiped the smiles off the union officials too. Lack of discipline, inability to appreciate the plight of the country, incitement to rebellion against the government—those were the accusations they saw coming.

It was time to treat the affair with all the dignity of public men. One whispered. One formed lobbies. One admitted the need of sub-committees. And at last we constituted ourselves into a commission and decided to sit in the upstairs hall of the Café de la Gare. We summoned all witnesses and representatives to accompany us.

There was a yell from Charles Cortal.

"And leave these camels here to steal our grapes while we are away?" he asked. "These thieving sons of mackerels?"

Two of the shunters were still unobtrusively picketing the tower. A third was inside. We formally ejected them. Grande Vitesse and Petite Vitesse were called upon to stand guard.

"And if one wishes to enter?" asked Grande Vitesse timidly.

"It cannot be permitted," the General Manager ordered.

"One can find everything necessary on the station."

"That I forbid absolutely!" shouted Delage.

"Bien! One will be instructed to make whatever arrangements one can," said the General Manager in his most conciliatory manner.

I cannot say that the commission was a success. The hall had not been used for a long time. We could not expand in an atmosphere which reeked of mice and the ancient smoke of locomotives. And then—we could not create tradition where none existed.

We suggested that the grapes be given to a hospital. Not one of the railwaymen agreed. They said that next year and for all the years we liked they would send enough grapes to hospitals to resurrect the dead; but this year it was unthinkable. There had been insults. There was a question of principle to be decided—though heaven alone knows what cursed principle it was.

So we offered a third to the drivers and firemen, a third to the

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shunters, and a third to the station-master. No takers! Each wanted a half, and the other half to be divided.

The property of the company, then? Delage, being legally-minded, agreed to this, but the engineers and shunters would not have it. They explained with superfluous precision their right to the grapes, and demanded whether a company which had, in the immortal phrase, neither soul to be saved nor backside to be kicked could in any way be held responsible for the vine's luxuriance.

It was, I think, one of the big men from the Resistance who at last proposed that we should analyse the problem more closely by counting the bunches to be divided. He was used to the open air and desired an excuse to return to it. He was very bored by the commission.

The suggestion was ridiculous, but really we could think of nothing useful to do. So Grande Vitesse and Petite Vitesse were put to counting bunches, while we, the others, broke into groups, according to age and political inclination, up and down the yard. The heat was abominable. Those grapes were magnificent, and the last twenty-four hours had brought them to perfection.

Between the shunters and the drivers the military were compelled to take a little promenade. As for us, the visitors, we argued courteously and from an academic point of view; but it was not difficult to see that strong words would be used if we permitted ourselves to take the affair seriously. The Resistance man had already described Mme. Delage to the General Manager in terms for which I had to persuade him to apologize.

No one noticed the man with the wheelbarrow. He arrived unobtrusively. He was so much a part of France that one did not question his right to be in the railroad yard. He was a little old peasant, bent by labour in the fields, and with the long grey moustache of an ancient Gaul. He was wheeling a barrow with a ladder on it.

He stopped at the tower and looked benevolently at Grande Vitesse, who was on the roof counting bunches, and at Petite Vitesse, who was performing the feats of an acrobat through the window. He knew at once that their intentions were honest—they understood each other, those children of old France.

"They are just right, my grapes!" said the ancient, rubbing his hands. "Ah, how I know you! You have not changed in the war."

And he patted the trunk of the vine as if to congratulate it upon so punctual a response to the season.

He was quite unaffected by the crowd. I doubt if he even noticed us. Or perhaps he thought that we had come to watch.

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He had the face of a man who enjoys all the protection of his conscience and the law. I hastened to his side before everyone could speak at once.

"Is it your vine?" I asked him.

He sat down on the wheelbarrow and drew from his vast pocket a portfolio. The documents were imposing. They dated from the time of Napoleon III. Paper like that is not made nowadays. And he read them aloud, on and on—that the said Sieur Henri Duval sold to the railroad company the property as set forth in the accompanying schedule with all buildings and land and produce growing thereon with the exception of the said vine, and the said Sieur Henri Duval should have access at all times for the purpose of cultivating the said vine and the fruit of the said vine should belong to him and his heirs and assigns, and the said railroad company on their part—

"I am François Duval, voyez-vous," he declared, "son of Henri Duval, and I have here my birth certificate and copy of the will of Henri Duval."

"But it is plain the grapes are his!" grumbled Charles Cortal, who, you will remember, was a communist, and did not believe in private property. "Why worry about the damned documents? He can just as well leave them for us in the tower."

He shrugged his shoulders and strolled off to prepare Lulu for the road. We returned to Paris.

* * *

ALL AT SEA

The Dolphin is a kind of Whale
But fashioned on a smaller scale.
The school-tie holds him closer than
Even an old Etonian.

But whereas on the level green
Schoolboys disport, the Dolphin's seen
At play with surge and water-spout
Where breakers cannot bowl him out.

When France had kings, le fils ainé
Was called Le Dauphin. This, they say
(Although you can't believe their tales),
Was tantamount to Prince of Whales.

HARLEY QUINN

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Episode in Haiti

by RICHARD STERN

IT was a few minutes after seven o'clock, but the afternoon clerk was still on duty at the reception desk when I came downstairs from my room. "Monsieur Parks has not arrived?" I said.

"Non, monsieur."

"He has not telephoned?"

"Non, monsieur."

In the tropics, I told myself, one should make allowances for tardiness. Parks was already an hour late. It was true that he had been punctual enough before dawn that morning when he had picked me up and the two of us had gone flying in the small chartered plane; but that, I was convinced, had been for him more than a social engagement, more than a sight-seeing expedition although he had sought to represent it as a mere jaunt.

"I shall wait in the bar," I told the clerk. "When Monsieur Parks arrives—"

"Oui, Monsieur." His manner said plainly that all things happened in their own time, that impatience accomplished nothing. A sound philosophy. I smiled at him as I turned away.

I have often speculated on the course events might have taken had I decided to wait in the entrance hall—or, for that matter, if I had stayed upstairs in my room. I would not then, of course, have met the old man, Jonas Peters, nor seen the other one, the big one with the yellow hair, Bruno Dodge. But in the end, I think, everything would have been the same. I was already involved, although at that time I had no way of knowing, and no reason to suspect.

The old man came first. He had been waiting for me, I know that now. Then, however, it seemed merely the sort of thing that happens in foreign countries.

"Mr. Hunter," he said, as he approached the table I had taken. "You will forgive me, I am sure. At this time of year visiting Americans are not common in this ancient republic."

"I suppose not," I said. He was a tall, erect old man, with wide shoulders, white hair and a large nose. He was smiling, and his eyes, vividly blue in a smooth tanned face, seemed amused. He sat down.

"The hurricane season, you know, Mr. Hunter, and the heat—

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The change in the expression of her lovely face was not pleasant to see. "You don't care to be involved do you?" she said

there is very little to attract visitors." He nodded to the bartender. "If I may presume to suggest," he said, "Haitian rum is excellent. I fancy myself as a connoisseur and I consider it beyond compare." Then he spoke to the bartender in rapid French, ordering two rum punches—not too sweet. He turned to me again.

"My name is Peters, Mr. Hunter, Jonas Peters. I obtained your name from the guest register. You are, I believe, a lawyer—and on holiday?"

"Yes." I wondered into what niche he fitted. I am still wondering.

"And a flyer, Mr. Hunter. With wartime experience, perhaps?" He paused there, watching my frown, and the amusement in his eyes seemed to deepen. "There is nothing mysterious in my knowing, I assure you, Mr. Hunter. Haiti is, has always been, a gigantic sounding-board, an echoing room. There are no secrets in Haiti. Napoleon's generals found that to be true when they attempted to conquer this island."

I smiled at him. "You mean drums?"

"I am not being facetious, Mr. Hunter. Drums, yes, but also what in Creole they call 'talk-a-mouth.'" He shrugged. "You were flying, early this morning, in a chartered aircraft, Mr. Hunter, and since young Mr. Parks from the embassy who accompanied you is not a flyer, the inference is obvious." He watched the bartender put down our drinks, then took the chit, signed it swiftly, and leaned back in his chair. "Your health, Mr. Hunter!"

At the end of the bar a man finished his drink and set down the glass.

I noticed this man only because of his size; he was, I think, as big a man as I have ever seen—tall, immensely broad without fat, with flaring yellow hair. He tossed a coin on the bar and walked out in the direction of the hall, setting his feet down soundlessly, moving without haste, yet quickly, like a bear in the woods.

Peters said, "As well as I know this country, Mr. Hunter, I have never really seen it from the air. The bay of Port-au-Prince must be a stirring sight at dawn."

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"It is."

"And out along the coast—" He paused, smiling. "It must have been interesting."

"The grapevine is efficient," I said.

"It is, Mr. Hunter." There was a subtle change in his eyes. The amusement was gone, abruptly replaced by something else—speculation, perhaps. "It is, indeed. The grapevine, as you call it—" He looked up then. The reception clerk was coming towards us.

"Telephone, monsieur," the clerk said. There was satisfaction in his voice. One had merely to wait and all things happened; here, in the telephone call, was proof of this.

"Excuse me," I said to Peters.

The voice on the telephone took me off-balance. It was not Parks; it was a woman's silver accents. "Mr. Hunter? This is Louise Parks, Howard's sister."

"Yes?"

"Have you seen Howard? Or have you heard from him?"

"No, I haven't." I looked at my watch. It was twenty-five minutes to eight. "I've been expecting him."

"So have I." The words came out too fast; they almost ran together. "That is, I've been expecting both of you. Howard told me six o'clock and it's long past that now, and—" Her voice trailed off.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I thought it best to wait here."

There was a little silence. "Would you mind very much taking a taxi, Mr. Hunter? Any driver will know where we live. It's in Petionville, you know."

"Yes," I said. "Howard showed me this morning. But wouldn't it perhaps be better, Miss Parks, if we made it another time? Howard seems to have been delayed, and—"

"No! Please!" It was not mere politeness. It was more than that, a great deal more. "Please, Mr. Hunter, take a taxi and come up, and—"

"Of course," I said.

"We'll have a martini. Do you like martinis, Mr. Hunter?" It was fright in her voice, that much was plain. The words tumbled over one another.

"Why, yes," I said. "I do."

"You'll—you'll hurry?"

"I'll come at once, Miss Parks."

I went back into the bar. Peters was still at our table.

"I'm sorry," I said. "An engagement." I smiled. "I've been summoned."

"Indeed, Mr. Hunter?" There was no mistaking the change in his eyes now. They had turned cold and hard, as cold and as hard as blue ice. Then, abruptly, they were amused again. "Another time, Mr. Hunter."

"Yes," I said, "of course. Thank you for the drink. Good-bye, Mr. Peters."

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" Au revoir."

At the door I paused and turned ; I cannot explain why. He was watching me in a speculative sort of way. There were small crinkles of thought at the corners of his eyes. He raised his glass and made a small bow and I turned away and went out to the taxis.

Petionville is a suburb above Port-au-Prince, a twenty-minute drive. My driver made it in fifteen. Louise Parks was already on the front steps when we came up the drive. She was young—younger than Howard, younger, even, than I had thought from her voice. She wore black velvet trousers and ballet slippers and a loose white silk shirt. Her hair was fair, a paler gold than that of the big man in the bar—and I wondered that I should remember him, that I should think of him at that moment.

She took my hand. " Thank you, Mr. Hunter. It was sweet of you to come." Her voice was under control now ; the words no longer ran together.

" Not at all," I said.

I followed her into the house and out on to a broad screened verandah, cool and restful. A cocktail cabinet was set against the wall.

She stood there in silence, her hands clasped, looking at my face. It was beginning again, the nervousness that had been in her voice on the telephone.

" I can't imagine where he is, or what he's doing. He told me this morning that he'd pick you up about six and bring you straight here. I haven't heard a word since. I've phoned the embassy and spoken to the Ambassador on his private line. I've tried the Club. It's—it's silly, because there just aren't places here where he could have dropped in after work as one does in New York—" She was silent, looking at my face.

" Don't worry Miss Parks," I said. " He'll turn up."

She nodded slowly. " Of course."

" I left word at the hotel."

" Yes," she said. She was silent for a moment, getting herself under control.

" I promised you a martini, didn't I ? Will you mix them, please ? " She nodded towards the cocktail cabinet. And then somewhere in the house a telephone rang, and she looked up. " Excuse me," she said, and almost ran across the room and into the hall. I heard a door close.

While I mixed the drinks I tried to understand, and failed. I felt uncomfortable, awkward, an outsider. I found myself listening, waiting for her to come back, to say that Howard was on his way, that he had been delayed by some perfectly simple and innocuous occurrence.

She came back into the room walking slowly, her hands clasped together in front of her. She was smiling. " I'm sorry," she said. She sat down on the sofa facing the low coffee-table. She looked at her drink and then at me.

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"Santé, Mr. Hunter."

"Your health," I said, and I watched her unclasp her hands and reach for her glass. It was not too full but some of the liquor slopped over the edge and on to the table and she withdrew her hand slowly and sat there staring at the little puddle without movement, without sound. I put my own glass down untouched.

"It wasn't Howard who phoned?" I said.

"No." She looked up then. "It was the Ambassador. He—he has telephoned the Foreign Office and the police." Her voice was toneless, and her smile was gone.

"But that's absurd," I said. "Howard—" I didn't know how to finish.

"People don't just disappear in this country." She kept her hands tightly together in her lap. She seemed to be talking to herself, trying to be logical, dispassionate. "Not—not foreigners. It's a small town. There are no secrets."

The old man Jonas Peters had said the same.

"But still," I said, "good heavens, Howard's an American; he's in the embassy."

"The Ambassador told me to stay here."

She paused. "He told me to tell you to stay, too. He wants to talk to both of us."

"But—" I began, and there I stopped. "Of course."

"I don't understand it, either, Mr. Hunter. I'm—I'm just afraid."

I looked down at the small puddle her shaking fingers had spilled around her drink. I looked at her. She was staring straight ahead, without expression. It was a time for reassurances, but, somehow, I couldn't quite bring myself to make them, to tell her that Howard would come walking in at any moment, because I didn't think that he would—then, or ever. It had got to me, too, and I could not have said how or why. "Drink your martini," I said. "Use both hands if you have to. It doesn't matter if a little spills." And then I looked away.

The Ambassador was short and round, almost bald, with a permanent smile that seemed never to touch his eyes. The Minister of Police, who came with him, was more the traditional picture of a diplomat. We sat, the four of us, there on the verandah.

The Ambassador said, "We have no word yet, Miss Parks. I am sorry." And then he looked at me. "How long have you known Howard Parks, Mr. Hunter?"

"He was at college when I was there—a year ahead of me, I think."

"You didn't know him well?"

"Only by sight, then, but later, during the war, in Italy, I knew him better. He was attached to the embassy in Rome; I was with the Air Force and we had quite a few dealings."

He was like a good lawyer conducting his examination of a witness. "Were you intimate friends, would you say, Mr. Hunter?"

"No. Acquaintances, rather."

He nodded.

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The Minister said, "The airplane, Your Excellency."

The Ambassador nodded again. He had been working up to that all the time. I knew what was coming. I had followed the same reasoning myself.

"You were not close friends," the Ambassador said. "You had not seen one another since the war. You met by chance at the airport yesterday when you landed here from Cuba. Yet Howard went to the length of chartering a plane, getting up before dawn this morning—going, actually, to quite a bit of trouble and some expense to go flying with you. Can you explain that, Mr. Hunter?"

"No," I said, "I can't.

"He put it on a sight-seeing basis. The best way for me to see the country, he said, was from the air because road travel was difficult and limited. It seems far-fetched, unless he wanted to fly himself and knew that I was a flyer."

"We have flyers, too, Mr. Hunter," the Minister said. "Their rates are reasonable."

"Where did you go, Mr. Hunter?" the Ambassador asked.

I had been over that in my mind too. "Over the city, out along the coast, up here to Petionville; Howard wanted to see his house from the air."

"And what did you see, besides the house?"

I spread my hands. "What *would* you see? The city, the buildings, the pattern of streets, the mountains, the bay, the island of Gonave, a few fishing-boats, a schooner, an inbound freighter, the small huts among the trees, the houses up here—"

"Nothing that stands out in your mind?"

"No, nothing." Louise's eyes had never left my face; I was conscious of them. Vaguely, I said, "I'm sorry. I'd like to help, but—"

A white-coated servant had appeared in the doorway. We all looked at him. To the Minister of Police he said, "The telephone, monsieur."

Louise drew her breath in sharply. It was a small, frightened sound.

The Ambassador said, "I am sorry, my dear. We are doing all that—"

"I don't understand," I said. "It's none of my business, I know, but just because a man is missing for an hour or two—"

"Let me put it this way," the Ambassador said. "If a man of yours during the war was missing for two hours between two known points—"

"That was in wartime."

"Precisely, Mr. Hunter." His eyes, on my face, were cool and sharp. His voice was almost angry. "This is not Korea; nor is it Germany, where tensions have been publicized. But—" He stopped there.

"Oh," I said, and I looked at Louise. This, of course, was the explanation of her behaviour. "I see." She said nothing, only gazed at her hands.

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" I'm sorry," I said.

From the doorway the Minister of Police said, " Your Excellency, if I may speak to you ? "

The Ambassador got up abruptly. The two of them stood together, talking in low voices. I watched them, and Louise, I knew, was watching them too. When the Ambassador turned back to us and came slowly across the verandah, unsmiling now, I think we both knew what he was going to say.

He stopped before Louise, stood looking down at her. " The police have found Howard." He paused.

" In the garden, behind the hotel."

Louise said nothing for a time, just sitting there, looking at her hands. She raised her head slowly.

" He's—he's dead ? "

" Yes, my dear," the Ambassador said. His voice was gentle, but his eyes were no longer cool and sharp ; his face was beginning to colour with anger. " He is dead."

The Ambassador drove me to the hotel on his way to the embassy. The driver jumped out to open the door. " One moment, Mr. Hunter," the Ambassador said. I could see him dimly, sitting back in his corner, his face thoughtful. " I am cabling Washington tonight."

" Of course," I said.

He looked at me then.

" Among other things, I shall ask for whatever information Washington can provide concerning you."

" I don't blame you. There is too much coincidence—"

" Precisely." He was silent for a few moments. " Until I hear from the department, which should be tomorrow, you will, of course, remain available."

" Yes."

" And if the department has nothing to report—" He paused. " In that event, Mr. Hunter, I think it would be well if you left the country immediately."

He paused again. " Your continued presence here could prove embarrassing."

" I'm afraid I don't understand that. To whom ? "

" To the United States, Mr. Hunter. You are an American. I don't want to give anyone the opportunity of making of you a cause célèbre, a focal point for suspicion in this matter."

" Oh," I said. I turned it over in my mind. " I wouldn't like that either. I'm a lawyer—and a scandal, even here at this distance from home, wouldn't do me any good."

He nodded. " Then we understand one another. Good night, sir."

The same reception clerk was on duty. He paid me no more attention than before. He handed me my key, and a folded note from my box. The note was from Jonas Peters :

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I shall be in the bar. I should like to talk to you when you return.

I crumpled the note and threw it in the waste-paper-basket. I thought of what the Ambassador had said and of what I, myself, had been thinking. I stood there indecisively.

"I have had no dinner," I told the clerk. "The dining-room is closed?"

"Oui, monsieur."

"Can I get a sandwich?"

"Oui, monsieur. In the bar."

By such narrow margins are things decided.

Peters was at the same table. He had a game of solitaire laid out. I went over and sat down, and he smiled at me and gathered the cards.

"You arrive fortuitously, Mr. Hunter," he said. "I was on the verge of cheating." His eyes showed nothing. It was as if he had drawn a curtain behind them. He raised his finger and the bartender appeared immediately.

He watched me while I ordered, and when the bartender had gone, he leaned back in his chair and took out a gold cigarette-case and lighter. He lighted the cigarette carefully.

"This is a distressing business, Mr. Hunter."

"It is." I hesitated. Despite the Ambassador, and despite my own inclinations, I had to know. "And you—"

He raised his hand. "All in good time, Mr. Hunter. Let me ask my questions first."

I shook my head. "Why should I tell you anything?"

He was silent for a little time, studying me. "I think you will, Mr. Hunter. I was careless in something I said. I underestimated your shrewdness, a thing I do not often allow myself to do.

"You have questions you want to ask me because of that small bit of carelessness. I shall answer them. After you have answered mine."

"The Ambassador—" I began.

"George and I are friends of long standing. I see no need to trouble him with what can, after all, be settled between you and me." He paused. "I can put your conscience at rest, Mr. Hunter, and that should be worth a good deal to you."

He saw too deeply; he had sized me up too well. I had tried to ignore it, but it had been there all the time, nagging at me.

"You are on the horns of a dilemma, Mr. Hunter. You are afraid that you may know, or have guessed something that is concerned with the death of young Mr. Parks. If it is pertinent, you should tell it to the Ambassador, or to the police. But at the same time, and prudently, I might add, you have no desire to become involved in something which concerns neither you nor the late Mr. Parks. I admire prudence."

"What are your questions?" I said.

"I should like to know all about your flight this morning."

"Why?"

"For my own reasons, Mr. Hunter."

I hesitated. He watched me, smiling, and the smile told me nothing.

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"All right," I said. "It was Parks' idea. It was a sight-seeing tour, he said . . ."

I went through it all, precisely as I had gone through it with the Ambassador and the Minister of Police. Peters watched me and listened, and when I had done he was silent for a little time studying the ash of his cigarette.

"But you know that it was *not* a sight-seeing tour, Mr. Hunter. You know that—"

He stopped there while the bartender brought my sandwich and small salad and coffee and then left us again.

"I think," I said, "that my questions come now."

"Fair enough, Mr. Hunter."

I wanted a moment or two to organize things in my mind. I took a bite of the sandwich and a sip of the coffee. "The Ambassador knew I had been flying. The Minister of Police knew. Just as you did. Apparently it is common knowledge. But neither of them knew *where* I had flown, while you did."

"I am annoyed with myself for that bit of carelessness, Mr. Hunter. There was no need for me to mention your flying out along the coast. It was clever of you to pick it up."

"You saw the plane this morning," I said. "That is how you knew."

"Correct, Mr. Hunter." His smile widened. "Shrewdness *and* imagination."

"All right," I said. "Tell me—"

"No; that is the wrong approach. I promised to answer questions."

"That's quibbling."

He said nothing.

"All right," I said again. "You want to know how much I know, or how much I've guessed. I'll tell you. I have guessed that you were the reason that Parks wanted to go flying, that he knew you were up to something and wanted to see it for himself. That's why he didn't want to take a professional pilot, because he didn't want to run the risk of having the man talk. I turned up unexpectedly and he jumped at the chance."

"You reason well, Mr. Hunter."

"I'll go on," I said. I wanted to watch some of the complacency disappear from that face. "You were out along the coast when you saw us. There is nothing out there. But there was a schooner not far off-shore, headed out to sea. It could have landed during the night, in some small cove, put a cargo ashore, put out again just before dawn."

"My admiration for you continues to increase, Mr. Hunter."

"Smuggling—" I began, and there I stopped, for I thought I saw a flicker of something in his eyes. It was quickly gone.

"Well," I said. "Does it add up?"

He got a fresh cigarette, lighted it carefully. "Let us say, Mr. Hunter, that it is an intelligent hypothesis. Let us, for the moment, assume that it is true."

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"Purely hypothetical, of course," I said.

The blue eyes were amused. "You also indulge in sarcasm, Mr. Hunter. You have many facets."

He was imperturbable. He was also, I was beginning to believe, more than a little dangerous.

"Extending your hypothesis," Peters said, "you arrive, of course, at the conclusion that I killed Mr. Parks to prevent him from telling what he saw, or from using what he saw."

He shook his head. "You err there, Mr. Hunter. You should be able to see the flaws in that conclusion. There are at least two. First, assuming that Mr. Parks had some damaging information concerning me, why did he not use it? He had the entire day to do whatever he wished to do, to tell whatever he wished to tell. I could have silenced him, if that had been my purpose, only by killing him this morning, not this evening."

"There are several possible answers to that," I said. "Opportunity, or lack of sure knowledge that it was Parks in the plane."

"Granted," Peters said. "But my point nevertheless carries weight. The second point, I think, is conclusive. Mr. Parks did not leave the embassy until six o'clock.

"At that time, I was here in the bar. I left the bar shortly after you did, and went into the dining-room for dinner. After dinner I came back here. I was here when Mr. Parks' body was found. During the critical hours, from six until approximately eight-thirty, I was here in the hotel in plain sight of a dozen persons. Is your conscience settled now, Mr. Hunter?"

"You could have had someone—"

"Mr. Hunter—I have, in my time, found it necessary to dispense with one or two persons. I make no secret of it. I have never found it necessary to have someone else to do the chore for me."

The curtain had lifted at last. His eyes were cold now, glittering, and his entire face had taken on a predatory expression that was startling to see. I could believe what he was saying. I could also believe what he was implying.

"That's a back-handed threat, of course?"

His face softened slowly. He put down his cigarette, picked up the cards and straightened them in his long fingers. "I contracted to set your conscience at rest, Mr. Hunter. I have done that, I believe. I shall rely on your prudence to cause you to forget the entire matter."

He pushed back his chair and stood up. "Allow me, please, to pay for your meal. Good-night, Mr. Hunter."

Sleep took time in coming that night. I lay in the darkness beneath the mosquito net, hearing the sounds outside—the rustle of the wind in the palms, somewhere the faint throbbing of drums, a voice speaking Creole in the courtyard below, a brief burst of laughter. There were footsteps in the hall, the rattle of a key . . . I thought of the girl Louise. She was alone now, all alone. I thought of her brother, whom I had never known well, whose life had touched

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mine only casually and only three times : at college, during the war, here in Haiti. Did acquaintance impose obligation on me ? In the morning, I thought—and the rest of the thought eluded me. I sank into sleep.

At breakfast the next morning I saw the big man again. This time he came directly to my table, advancing soundlessly, setting his feet down with his toes slightly turned in as he walked ; watching him, I thought again of a bear.

" Mr. Hunter," he said. " I am Bruno Dodge. I want to talk to you. May I sit down ? " It was a deep voice, a pleasant voice ; it rumbled with good nature. His English was almost accentless. " A matter of business."

" I'm just a tourist," I began.

His laughter was as deep as his voice. It rumbled across the dining-room.

" I am not selling anything."

He pulled back a chair and sat down. His laughter subsided. " I am an importer here in Port-au-Prince, Mr. Hunter. I am also an exporter—sisal goods, woven cotton materials, other things."

" Oh ? " I said politely.

" I export chiefly to New York, to a biggish firm which handles these things : you may perhaps know of them, Mr. Hunter ? "

I shook my head. " I don't understand—"

He laughed again and the whole table shook.

" But it is simple. You are a lawyer. You practise in New York." He pulled a folded newspaper from his pocket. " At this season of the year, visitors are listed." He pointed to a small paragraph headed : *Arrivals*.

" I need a lawyer to represent me in New York, perhaps to bring an action. The company has been shall we say, dilatory in its payments to me."

He shook his head. " No, that is the wrong word. They haven't paid me at all."

I braced myself for the laughter this time. My coffee-cup rattled in its saucer. " Is it a large sum ? " I said.

He shrugged. " To you maybe, no. To me, yes. Twenty-three thousand dollars is a large sum in this country, Mr. Hunter."

" It's an appreciable sum anywhere." I sipped my coffee. It was wrong, I thought ; people didn't do business that way. He knew nothing about me beyond the announcement in the newspaper. I said, " Wouldn't it be better, perhaps, if you went up to New York yourself, talked to these people, and then, if you need legal help—"

" I have found, Mr. Hunter, that I can be in only one place at a time."

His chuckle was startling, but it lacked the shock effect of the full laugh. " My business here requires me, and my business there requires me." He spread his hands.

" Well—" I said.

" I have receipts of delivery, Mr. Hunter. Custom receipts, bills of lading, all papers in order—"

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"Well," I said again, "I'll look them over if you want."

"Splendid." He paused. "You are returning to New York?"

I thought of what the Ambassador had said. "Yes," I replied.

"Then it arranges itself. Ordinarily—" He paused there and smiled.

"It is embarrassing, but between lawyer and client there should be no secrets. I need that money as quickly as possible." He spread his hands again. "You can understand. A sum of that magnitude—"

"I think I understand," I said.

He pushed back the chair and stood up. "I will have the papers sent up immediately."

"I'll be interested to see them." I watched him walk off across the dining-room. A curious person, Mr. Dodge; a curious country, Haiti!

I had one more caller that morning. I was in my room looking over Dodge's papers which were, as he had said, all there and all in order. They had been delivered promptly by a boy who had obviously been instructed to put them directly into my hands.

I was studying them, wondering about them, when a knock came at the door. I said, "Come in." Then I pushed back my chair and stood up. "Miss Parks!" She was the last person I had expected to see.

She closed the door behind her. "I—I wanted to talk to you."

"Of course." I hesitated, watching her. There were no signs of tears, but her face was drawn, and her eyes seemed unnaturally bright. "Yesterday," I said, "last night, I didn't offer you my sympathy. It didn't seem to be quite the time, or—"

"Thank you." She took the chair at the writing-desk. I perched on the bed.

"I want to ask you to do me a favour, Mr. Hunter."

"I'll be glad to, if I can."

"You can." Her eyes were steady on my face.

"I want you to take me flying."

There was a directness in her voice; and in her manner, a decisiveness that had not been there last night. It was plain that her mind was made up. In that moment, watching me, waiting for my reply, she bore a strong resemblance to Howard. There was the same determination, the same strength.

"I don't understand," I said. "Where do you want to fly? When? Why—" I stopped there. "Oh—I think I see."

"Yes," she said. "Tomorrow morning, just before dawn."

"Now, Miss Parks," I said. "Isn't that, perhaps—"

"It's not a sentimental gesture, if that's what you're thinking."

That made it even worse.

"I want to fly exactly where you and Howard flew. I want to see what you saw, or what Howard saw, because—" She stopped there, and took a deep breath and blinked rapidly three or four times, but her eyes didn't leave my face.

"You think that something he saw yesterday morning was responsible—"

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"Yes." She was silent for a moment or two. "I believe you think so too."

"I—" I was thinking, of course, of the old man, Peters, and of our talk in the bar last night. I was thinking, too, of the Ambassador, and of myself.

"I don't know what to say, Miss Parks."

She said nothing. She watched me.

"If you have an idea," I said, "wouldn't it be better to take it to the embassy, or to the police?"

"I have taken it to the Ambassador. He—he isn't interested. He thinks I'm being hysterical."

"And the police?"

"The police"—she said it quite calmly—"think that Howard killed himself. There was a gun beside him."

I stared at her. "But that's absurd." Or was it? Because it was a new, strange theory? The doubt must have showed in my face.

She said, "It *is* absurd. You too know it's absurd. Howard—"

"I didn't know him very well, Miss Parks. I hadn't seen him for some years until I happened to run into him when I got off the plane." I left the rest unsaid.

For as long as it might take a man to count to ten, she said nothing. I watched the changing expression of her face; it showed first in the set of her chin and then in her mouth and then, at last, it reached her eyes. It was not pleasant to see.

"And you don't care to be involved, do you? Isn't that what you're saying?"

I wished that she had not chosen that word. "Miss Parks, I came down here on holiday. I wanted to see this country that people are talking about so much. I met Howard entirely by accident. I seem to be mixed up in something I don't understand. I'm not sure I want to understand it. I am very sorry about your brother, but—"

"Thank you." She looked away then. Her eyes caught the papers on the desk. She picked one of them up and then put it down again and looked back at me. She said nothing.

"Those are business papers, Miss Parks," I said.

"So I see. Bruno Dodge." And her tone gave the name a special significance. She stood up.

"Howard used to talk about you, Mr. Hunter. Or should I say Major Hunter? When he came back from Italy he was full of you." She paused. "He said that the luckiest thing that ever happened to him was his running into you at the airport the day before yesterday."

"Miss Parks—"

"You—" She stopped there for only a moment, and drew a breath that seemed to shake her entire body. "You don't even mix a good martini, Mr. Hunter. Good-bye." She closed the door quietly.

I sat where I was.

It was a little past noon when a messenger came from the embassy.

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The Ambassador would like to see me, if it was convenient. The messenger was a bright-faced, serious young man. "I have a car waiting, sir."

"Of course." I gathered the papers on the desk, folded them, replaced them in their envelopes and put on my coat. The young man held the door for me.

We walked together through the hall. I put my key on the reception desk. Behind me, Jonas Peters said, "Good morning, Mr. Hunter." He was smiling.

He glanced at the young man, then looked at me again. "You must give my regards to my good friend the Ambassador."

"I will certainly do so."

Something flickered deep behind his eyes, a small warning flash, no more. "Splendid! A drink, perhaps, Mr. Hunter, when you return?"

"Perhaps," I said.

He nodded, turned away and walked off across the lobby, his wide shoulders swinging easily. To a martial beat, I thought; there was that about him; I could almost hear the trumpets and the drums . . .

The Ambassador was not alone. There was a man with him, a small, calm, serious man, perhaps forty-five years of age. "This is Mr. Potter," the Ambassador introduced him. "Mr. Potter flew from Washington early this morning."

I sat down and waited.

The Ambassador said, "As far as the department can determine, Mr. Hunter, you have a clean bill of health." His manner was more friendly today.

"I'm glad to hear it," I said.

Potter stirred a little in his chair. "Have you any ideas about this, Major?"

I thought of the girl standing in my room looking at me.

"I understand that the police think it was suicide."

The Ambassador said nothing.

Potter said, "It's simpler for them that way, Major. Do *you* think it was suicide?"

"I don't know. I didn't know him very well." I hesitated. "But I doubt it."

Potter nodded. "So do we."

I still don't know at what point my mind had been made up. It may have been the theory of suicide that did it; it may have been the girl; it may have been lots of things.

"There is a man named Peters," I said, "Jonas Peters—" I stopped there, watching Potter's face. "You know him?"

"I do, indeed," said Potter. He looked at the Ambassador. "I didn't know—"

"Jonas," the Ambassador said, "has a way of turning up almost anywhere. He is in business here, he claims, with a man named Dodge, Bruno Dodge, who does importing and exporting, and other things. What their business together really is—," he shrugged,

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" that is a matter for the local authorities ; and Mr. Dodge and the local authorities—"

He stopped there and his mouth closed angrily.

" Peters," Potter repeated. He was looking at me again. " What about him, Major ? "

What the Ambassador had said put it in a different light. I said, " I met him at the hotel. He seemed curious to know whereabouts Howard and I had been flying."

Potter waited. " That all, Major ? "

I nodded. " It isn't very much, but I thought you'd like to know."

His face was blank. He watched me for a time. " Thank you, Major. I'll have a talk with him."

The Ambassador looked at his watch. " Apropos of our little conversation last night, Mr. Hunter, it's too late, I'm afraid, for today's plane, but tomorrow I'll see that space is held for you." The implication was obvious ; he expected me to be aboard when tomorrow's plane took off.

" Thank you," I said. I stood up, hesitated. " I wonder if you would do me a favour. I was approached this morning about a piece of legal business . . ." I told them of Bruno Dodge, and his papers, and his New York problem.

The Ambassador said, " Mr. Dodge cannot go to the United States himself, Mr. Hunter. That is not widely known. I tell you for a purpose."

" Oh ? "

" There are at least two charges of passport-fraud standing against him in Washington. We have tried to have him extradited, without success."

" I see," I said. " Thank you."

Much of the friendliness had disappeared. " If you care to do business with a man like that, Mr. Hunter, there is, unfortunately, nothing I can do about it."

" I understand."

" I wonder if you do," the Ambassador observed. " The United States is not the only country where Mr. Dodge dare not go. The Dominican Republic, next door, for example—" He paused. " I'm not sure there would even be a trial for him in the Dominican Republic. Mr. Dodge is that sort of man."

" Thank you," I said. I nodded to both of them. " Good-bye."

There was no answer.

Outside, in the bright sun, I stood for a little time on the steps of the embassy, trying to get it all straight in my mind. There was too much, altogether too much. I nodded to a taxi-driver who had come out from the shade of a tree and opened his taxi-door hopefully. " Take me to a restaurant," I said. I didn't want to go back to the hotel. Not yet. I didn't want to see Peters again until I had had time to think.

The restaurant—Kalmar's—was on the edge of the Champ de Mars. I sat on the cool balcony, looking out across the green of the

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lawns to the Presidential palace and the palace of ministers. Two statues were in the foreground: one was of Dessalines, one of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Taken together, they were symbolic of the violence and intrigue that had plagued the entire island for a hundred and fifty years. And the violence and intrigue were not over yet, that much was sure. On the other half of the island, the Dominican Republic . . .

I was back to Bruno Dodge again, and what the Ambassador had said about Dodge's not daring to set foot across the border. I wondered if Peters was wanted there, too; it seemed logical that he was. The whole affair, I thought, was beginning to take shape. There were still gaps to be sure, but the broad outlines were there . . .

I went through it slowly, step by step. First, the flight with Howard Parks. I thought I knew the explanation for that; I was fairly sure I had been right in my guesses to Peters. He had assured me that there was nothing to it, but I was beginning to believe otherwise.

He and Dodge were in business together, the Ambassador had said, and yet at my first meeting with Peters, Dodge had been sitting across the bar and the two had not even bothered to recognize one another. And after Howard's death had been established, Peters had gone to some length to persuade me of his innocence. Why? He wanted to set my mind at rest, he said, and he had implied more, that he wanted me to forget the whole affair and go back to the States. And then the offer of legal work from Dodge, urgent legal work which could not wait. It could be legitimate; the fact that Dodge dared not go to the States himself lent the idea credibility.

For a long time I sat turning it over in my mind; and at last I was satisfied. I finished my lunch and walked down towards the centre of the town. I had several things to do.

I found a public telephone and an entry for Bruno Dodge in the directory. I rang him up. "I've looked over the papers," I said. "They seem to be in order. I don't believe there should be any difficulty in enforcing payment."

"You will do it, then?"

"I don't see any reason why not; I think I can handle it quite easily."

"It's worth a great deal to me, Mr. Hunter, to have it taken care of. And, as I told you this morning, as quickly as possible."

"I understand. I plan to leave on tomorrow's plane for Miami and then New York."

"Splendid. I knew I could count on you."

"Yes," I said. "I think you can."

I consulted the directory again. There were two entries under Parks—one for Howard, one for Louise, the same number for each. I looked at Howard's name for a long time. I still didn't know the answer to the question I had asked myself: Does acquaintance impose obligation? There was more to it than that. I disliked being duped; I rebelled at being thought a simpleton.

I was angry now. I phoned the number and Louise answered

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herself. "This is Marvin Hunter. Miss Parks. I have changed my mind; I'll take you flying."

There was a little silence. "I suppose I shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth, but—"

I didn't try to explain. "I'm going this afternoon, right now, and I'll take you if you want to come."

"Not tomorrow morning?"

"There isn't time," I said. "And I think this afternoon will do just as well."

There was only the smallest hesitation. "I'll meet you at the airport."

I had the plane already out and warmed up by the time she arrived. It was the same plane Howard and I had used, a small, high-wing cabin job which handled like a toy. She got in beside me; I fastened her door securely, released the brakes and taxied up to the head of the strip. We turned and headed into the wind, waiting for clearance from the tower.

"You said that you were going by yourself whether I came or not." She was watching me. "Do you know what you're looking for?"

"No." This was no more than the truth. I didn't want to tell her that I was not really looking for anything; that I doubted if there was anything to be seen. "We'll fly the same course," I said, "and maybe we'll be lucky."

It satisfied her. "What changed your mind?"

"I don't know. A good many things, I believe. People—"

She was smiling at me. It was the first time I had really seen her smile; it illuminated her face and her eyes.

"You found that you couldn't isolate yourself, is that it? People wouldn't let you alone?"

I thought of Peters, of Dodge. "Something like that."

"They wouldn't let you alone, because you're a part of it."

"I don't follow you."

"When something like—like this happens, it concerns everybody. Don't you see that? It's everybody's business. Didn't you learn that during the war?"

"Let's leave it," I said.

The tower gave me the light and I pushed the throttle forward and released the brakes. We began to roll down the runway. Out of the corner of my eye I could see that she was still watching me, still smiling.

The airport dropped behind us and we made a slow climbing turn out over the bay. The sun was brilliant on the water, bringing out fantastic colours, pale blue, turquoise, deep green, here and there the vivid white of the sand bottom or the vicious, dirty brown of a coral reef. I altered course, picked up the shore and started out along it. There is always a pleasure for me in flying, a feeling of headiness, of freedom, a lift in my mind. I felt it now. Louise said unexpectedly, "I feel better."

"Do you?"

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" It's as if I had just come out of the darkness into the sun."

" Flying does that for you."

" Not flying. It isn't that. It's—it's doing something."

I turned to look at her.

" It may not help at all," she said. " It—it won't bring Howard back. But at least we're trying. Don't you feel that too ? "

" Perhaps that's it," I said. I dropped down a little closer to the trees. " We'd better start looking. Maybe you'll see something I can't."

We flew for about twenty minutes in silence. She was watching out of her window, I was making a pretence of watching out of mine. We saw nothing that mattered—the shoreline, the trees, the road that wavered as it followed the contours, now close along the water, now half-a-mile inland. Here and there we saw a small clearing and a tiny white hut with perhaps a donkey tethered, or a goat and a bony dog which slunk into the brush, and small children who rushed out into the open to look up at us.

We reached the cove that I had fixed in my mind, and I dropped and circled it, remembering how close the schooner had been, trying to remember if there had been tracks on the sand, if there had been anything at all. There had not, of that I was sure. But that was what Peters wouldn't know, couldn't know, and so he would assume—

" Why are we circling here ? " Louise said. " Can you see something ? "

I shook my head. " This is the end of the line. This is where we turn around."

" Oh ! " Her voice was small, disappointed.

I pulled up, well over the trees, and steadied on a return course. " I'm sorry."

" It isn't your fault."

I hadn't realized how high I had raised her hopes.

" We tried," she said. " That's the important thing."

" You're too young to know that."

She just looked at me.

We swung in a wide circle to make our approach to the field, and started down. She said, " Not yet. We aren't going down now ? "

" Why not ? "

" You said—you told the Ambassador that you and Howard had flown up to Petionville."

" So we did. I'd forgotten." I was anxious to be on the ground now, to give Peters as much time as I could—"

" Then aren't we going up there now ? "

" We flew to Petionville only because Howard wanted to see your house from the air."

She said nothing and I turned to look at her. She was staring straight ahead, and the line of her chin was firm, set.

" Well," I said. " We'll go up there, if you want to."

" Don't you ? "

She was like a small terrier ; she had her teeth into something and she wasn't going to let go. In a way it was comical, in another

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way it was something to be admired. "Right," I said. "We started it. We'll finish it."

"Maybe something he saw up there—"

"All right," I said again. "It's a good idea."

But there was nothing in Petionville, and I knew it. We had already seen all there was to see. The schooner out along the coast just after dawn the day before had been the clue to the whole affair. Peters had told me that he relied on my prudence to make me forget that I had seen the schooner. And I had been prepared to forget it and go on my way and leave the matter to the Ambassador and to the police, if it had not been for threats and then a trap; from what I had learned from the Ambassador, things seemed to add up too plainly.

Suddenly Louise said:

"Look, there: that white house, with the big trees, and the sun on it."

My gaze followed her pointing finger.

It was another house, perhaps a half-mile from hers. It was also situated on a promontory, with an unobstructed view of the bay and the island of Gonave and the broad water beyond. Not so broad at that, I thought. Cuba lay a little to the north, and between Cuba and the island mass of Haiti and the Dominican Republic was the Windward Passage, and the water beyond the stretch of the bay was the wide part of the funnel leading into the straits. This all passed through my mind like a geography lesson, and then was gone because it was not pertinent. What lay below was, or maybe it was not, I don't know. But it was curious, anyway. I banked the plane to have a closer look.

"It's—it's a sort of aerial," Louise said. "It looks like the ones they have on police cars. Do you see it, in the top part of the tree? There! The sun is catching it now."

"I see it," I said.

"What does it mean?"

"I don't know," I said. "Probably nothing." I was beginning to guess what it meant; and I wished she had not seen it. "Whoever it is likes to listen to the radio. That's all."

"But that doesn't make sense," she said slowly.

"There's only one station here at Haiti, and you don't need an aerial to get it. And you don't need that sort of thing for short-wave, either. If the reception's good, you get it easily, and if it isn't, you don't listen."

"Maybe he does. Maybe he likes to, no matter what the reception is."

"He?" She was looking at me now. "Do you know whose house that is?"

I could have guessed, but I was afraid to. "It doesn't make any difference."

"It's Bruno Dodge's house."

"And there's yours. That's what we came to see, isn't it?"

She looked at me and then looked away again. She said nothing . . .

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We landed at the airport and taxied to the hangar. I switched off and just sat there for a moment in the sudden silence. "I thought I was fairly observant," I said. "It's beginning to look now as if maybe I wasn't."

"I'm not sure I understand you." Her voice was a little friendlier now.

"I'm not sure I understand myself." I reached across her and opened her door. "Let's go to—"

"My car's here. We can drive into town."

"There's a bar just across the road," I said, "Let's go there. Perhaps you'd like a drink. I know I would."

"All right," she said.

It was there, in the Aero Bar, that Peters found us. I had asked for it, of course; this had been my reason for the flight, to force his hand, to try to bring him out into the open. But it was all changed now.

He came in slowly, almost strolling. He walked directly to our table, and he took off his hat, an expensive fine-grained panama, and he made a little bow. "Miss Parks," he said. "Mr. Hunter." He pulled back a chair and sat down. "You will forgive the intrusion, I am sure."

The ice in his eyes was plain, and his nose, no longer merely large, reminded me of the beak of some great bird of prey, a horned owl, perhaps, or an eagle. "In case you are in any doubt, Mr. Hunter, I am armed."

From him it did not sound melodramatic, merely serious. "That is good to know," I said. "But here, in broad daylight—"

He ignored it. "I was under the impression, Mr. Hunter, that I had made it clear I wanted you to stay out of my business."

"Too clear," I said.

He nodded, but his face lost none of its threat. "That may have been a mistake on my part. No matter. Your prudence—"

"You've talked to Potter?" I said.

"I have. And now I find that you have been flying, presumably retracing your route of yesterday morning." He looked at Louise for a moment. He looked back to me. "It was not wise of you, Mr. Hunter."

The whole script was changed now. I had to improvise. "There was nothing to see," I said. "Your guns weren't there."

His eyes widened a little, but that was the only change. "Guns, Mr. Hunter?"

"It must inevitably be guns," I said. "Smuggling anything else into this country wouldn't be worth your while. This isn't the States—where there's a lot of money, and maybe a big profit for evading duty. It has to be something contraband,—and when you add to it that you are mixed up with Dodge—"

Louise made a little sound. I put my hand out and touched hers. "This time," I said, "I think I'm right." I looked at Peters again. "You and Dodge, plus the fact that Dodge is wanted next door in the Dominican Republic where a lot of people have tried a lot of

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times to whip up a revolution since Trujillo came into power . . . Guns seem the logical answer. Land them from a schooner here, and smuggle them across the border a few at a time—"

"Those are rather dangerous assumptions, Mr. Hunter."

"Maybe." I had to know, and I thought that this way I could tell. When you want an admission from a witness, you can get it sometimes by crowding him on one subject, focusing his concentration on that, and then springing your real question on him without warning.

"But is the radio part of it?"

He was too good, he had been at this sort of thing too long, to allow much to show. But I was watching him carefully, and I was sure his astonishment was real.

"Radio, Mr. Hunter? What radio?"

I shook my head. There was one more question, and this was the time for it. "Did you know that there are at least two standing charges against your friend Dodge in Washington?" I paused there, and watched him digest it. "They are for passport fraud, Mr. Peters. The Ambassador told me, so I imagine that the information is correct. What does passport fraud connote to you? Or don't you care?"

I didn't think I was taking too long a chance. The Ambassador had spoken of Peters by his first name, and he had gone out of his way to warn me about Dodge, but both he and Potter had somehow given me the impression that Peters was a different matter entirely. And then there was the man himself, and I was counting on my own estimate of him. Guns, yes, that I could believe. But the other, no. Still—

"Passport fraud, Mr. Hunter? It does indeed have an unpleasant connotation these days. Persons who connive in order to enter the United States—"

"It's your country, too isn't it, Mr. Peters? Don't you carry an American passport?"

His face softened a trifle. There was a hint of amusement in his eyes. "Are you waving the flag at me, Mr. Hunter?"

I said nothing.

His face changed again. The amusement disappeared, and the ice was back in his eyes. "I should like to hear more about our friend Mr. Dodge." He paused. "You mentioned a radio?"

I told him what we had seen. I added just one thing. "An aerial could be for reception. It could also be for transmission."

He listened carefully. When I had finished, he took out the gold cigarette case and lighter, offered them, and lighted his cigarette with great deliberation.

"You did not see this aerial yesterday morning."

"No, but Parks did."

"That is mere conjecture, Mr. Hunter."

"I don't think so." I looked at Louise Parks. "Tell him what you told me."

She nodded.

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"After breakfast yesterday morning," she said, "Howard left for the embassy, I thought. I drove down the hill fifteen or twenty minutes later to do some errands. When I got back, I found that he had come back too, and had changed his clothes and gone out again. It—it didn't seem important then."

Peters said, "What was wrong with the clothes he had been wearing, Miss Parks?"

"They were soaked with perspiration. It didn't occur to me at the time, but he must have been walking, don't you see—and he had his car, so why would he walk, unless—"

"Unless he had gone to see from the ground what he had seen from the air, is that what you think, Mr. Hunter?"

"It adds up."

"Possibly," Peters said. He watched me for a little time. "Your reasoning, as I see it, goes like this. Mr. Parks, by some means which do not appear, was aware that a certain event was going to take place out along the coast early yesterday morning. He wanted to see it for himself, and so he had you fly him there. He saw the schooner and realized its implication.

"On the return to Port-au-Prince, and probably on a whim, he suggested that you fly up to Petionville so that he might see his house from the air. He saw, as you and Miss Parks saw this afternoon, an aerial in the tree in front of Mr. Dodge's house, an aerial that would be concealed from the ground, an aerial that required explanation because of Mr. Dodge's known character and past indulgences in passport fraud. The Caribbean is, has always been, a powder-keg, similar in its way to the Balkans." He paused, and put out his cigarette.

"You're doing fine," I said.

"Thank you, Mr. Hunter. I am usually able to follow a plain trail. Let me resume . . . The Caribbean is a danger-spot, as I have said. To Mr. Parks, the possibility of a radio transmitter, an unknown radio transmitter, in the hands of a person of Mr. Dodge's background, might very well have been of greater importance than a piece of suspected smuggling.

"Mr. Parks, then, pursued the investigation of the radio, perhaps was imprudent enough to confront Mr. Dodge with his findings, and was, as a result—I am sorry, Miss Parks—silenced by Mr. Dodge."

He paused there and looked at me. "An ingenious theory, Mr. Hunter, but it will require substantiation."

"Three main points," I said. "First, Dodge was nowhere near the cove where the schooner had landed. You can substantiate that. Therefore, Dodge had nothing to fear from Parks' knowledge of that part of it. My guess is that Dodge can't even be connected with the guns."

"You are right there, Mr. Hunter, he cannot."

"And yet he wants me out of the country, and he tried to bribe me to go."

I saw the little signs of astonishment again in Peters' face. I told

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him about the papers and Dodge's request that I should attend to them. "That was a bribe, pure and simple. Dodge knows no more of me than my name and the fact that I am a lawyer. There are legal firms in New York, reputable firms, who specialize in that sort of thing. I do not. And there are local lawyers, here in Haiti and, I'm sure, known to Dodge, who could have put him in contact with such a New York firm."

Peters watched me steadily.

"The third point is means and opportunity. Dodge was in the hotel last night; Howard's body was found in the garden of the hotel. I doubt if Dodge can account for his whereabouts, as you can, during the critical hours."

Peters was silent for a little time.

"You make a convincing case, Mr. Hunter. There is, however, one point which requires explanation." His eyes seemed to be looking right into my mind. "Why do you tell *me*, why risk the possibility that I too am involved, rather than go directly to the embassy or to the police?"

"We would have," I said, "if you hadn't come in, armed, as you said. We would have anyway, I think, if I hadn't been afraid that it would be futile. The Ambassador made it plain that Dodge has some highly placed local friends. The police have already decided that Howard committed suicide, and that seems to bear the Ambassador out."

He shook his head. He was smiling, a tight little smile that held in it no amusement.

"That may be true, Mr. Hunter, and I think it is. Your attempt would be futile. But, I repeat, why do you think I am interested?"

Here it was, the last link. "Because Dodge was trying to double-cross you. And I don't think you're the kind of person to take that lying down."

It was a moment or two before he said anything. Then, "I am listening, Mr. Hunter."

I was glad it was Dodge I was talking about in that moment, and not myself. The old man's face was frightening to see.

"It was Dodge who told Parks where and when the guns were to be landed. Who else in Haiti knew? And he did it because for his purpose, which is probably to cause as much unrest in this area as he can, the implication of you, an American, in a gun-running project would be even better than an actual revolution next door.

"The Ambassador wants me out of the country because I am an American and it's known that I went flying with Howard; and the Ambassador, who doesn't appear to be a man to jump at shadows, is afraid that if I stay here gossip will begin to link me with Howard's death, and, by implication, the word will go around that the embassy is using its local influence to protect one of its citizens even though he may be guilty.

"If I leave, the story loses its point, because I'll be out of sight, out of mind." I paused there. Peters was watching me closely. "If the reputation of the United States has to be guarded so carefully,

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think what damage could be done to it if you were actually caught running guns."

He nodded slowly. "You are right, Mr. Hunter. You, if I may say so, have been admirably right on all points. I have been too concerned with my own interests—"

"You didn't see the radio," I said, "and you didn't know about the passport fraud. Without those, nothing adds up."

"But it does now, Mr. Hunter." He leaned forward and crushed out his cigarette. He picked up his hat. He was smiling, but his eyes were still like ice and the predatoriness of his face was plain to see. "You were quite right in your assumption that I do not think lightly of treason—or treachery."

I said, "I won't presume to try to tell you how to handle your own affairs, Mr. Peters, but—" I stopped there.

He was watching me. I sat looking down at the table. This was the decision that had to be made: on the one side there was the policy of non-involvement for me, the airplane tomorrow back to the States, the turning of my back on the whole matter. I could leave it in Peters' hands, that was clear. Bruno Dodge would meet with a fatal accident, and Howard's death would be evened up.

I looked at the girl. She was watching me, too. A thing like this was everybody's business, she had told me, and so it was, and there was the core of the matter.

I couldn't leave it, not at this point. I was in too far and my own self-respect wouldn't let me pull out. "I'm a lawyer, Mr. Peters," I said. "I approve of law and order."

"Bravo, Mr. Hunter."

"And I don't approve of gun-running." This, I knew, was mere balm for my conscience. Peters, I think, understood that, too. He said nothing. "On the other hand," I said, "I don't think I'd like to see *you* run the risk of landing in trouble for performing a public service."

Peters' smile spread. "Removing a cancerous growth named Dodge from the body politic, you mean, Mr. Hunter?"

"Yes. There is another way." I hesitated. "Do you know a local public official, highly placed, who would accept your word, and whose advice Bruno Dodge would heed?"

His eyes lost their cold fury. They began to sparkle. If I had not felt drawn to him before, I would still, in that moment, have found him almost irresistible. It was easy to understand the attitude of tolerant disapproval which the Ambassador and Potter had shown when I had mentioned Peters' name.

"I think I do, Mr. Hunter." He leaned towards me. "I am listening."

Later I sat in the hotel bar, alone this time. It was early night, dark, hot and still, strangely oppressive, the evening breeze not yet risen. I waited. If I was right—but I had to be right; he would have to react the way we had anticipated, because he would have no choice. I told myself this, sitting there, sipping at my punch, making it last as long as I could.

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That the reaction had already set in, I'll not deny, and I was beginning to regret that I hadn't made the other decision, left the whole thing in Peters' hands, let him take whatever steps he chose to take in dealing with Dodge's alleged treachery. *Alleged?* There was the hitch.

I had convinced Peters that my reasoning was correct, but suppose it were not?

"Good evening, Mr. Hunter."

I looked up. Dodge was towering over me, looking as if his chuckle would rumble up out of his big chest at any moment. "You seem pensive," he said.

"I—I guess I was."

"Thinking of our problem, no doubt?"

There was no way of knowing what he meant by that. "As a matter of fact, yes." The answer suited either problem.

"I tried to reach you earlier today, Mr. Hunter. I have received a letter from the New York company. Their figures are somewhat at variance with mine, and I thought that it would be well if we compared—"

"The papers you gave me are upstairs in my room. If you want to come up, we can look at them there."

"Splendid, Mr. Hunter." He watched me rise. "After you."

Going up the stairs, hearing the big man's soft, light step behind me, I was not happy. The skin between my shoulder-blades seemed unbearably tight, and there was a tingle at the base of my skull. I was being foolish and imaginative, I told myself; nothing would happen here, not now, not when the bartender had seen us together. But my mind insisted on returning to Howard—who only last night, here in the hotel grounds—

My hand shook a little when I put the key in the lock. It wouldn't turn to the left. I tried the knob; the door was already unlocked. Behind me, Dodge's voice said softly, "Go right in, Mr. Hunter." And something hard nudged me in the small of my back. There was no longer any doubt.

The room was dark. Dodge closed the door and switched on the light. I heard the lock turn, but my attention was not on that, nor on the gun that still pressed against me.

Louise lay on the bed, her hands and ankles tied behind her. There was a pillow covering her face, secured there with a piece of cord.

Dodge said, "You may untie her now, Mr. Hunter. I don't expect she will have suffocated yet." His chuckle was there, underlying the words.

I think that it took me only one jump to cross the room. I know that my fingers broke the cord as if it were thread. I held her up in a sitting position, my arm around her shoulders, while she drew in great shuddering gasps of breath, and the red, almost blue of her face began to fade, and the tiny inarticulate sounds died away.

Dodge said, "It seemed a reasonable precaution, Mr. Hunter, to bring the young lady, too."

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I should have seen it, but I hadn't. I had been too wrapped up in the cleverness of my reasoning. I should have sent her away before I talked to Peters, because now she knew too much, and so of course she was as deeply involved as I was, and that meant—

She stirred a little. I looked down at her face; she was smiling. "Hot, isn't it?" she said.

The wonder, the admiration in my mind must have showed in my face because her smile spread. "Yes," I said. "I'm afraid it's turning hotter."

Dodge said, "We will go now."

"Where?" I said. "Why?"

"Down the fire-escape, Mr. Hunter, to my automobile." He was no longer smiling; there was menace now in his face, in his eyes. "Bear in mind that I will shoot if I have to. You will go first, then Miss Parks, then I."

"You can't get away with it," I said. "If we meet somebody—"

"Hope that we won't, Mr. Hunter."

We did not. The rear of the hotel was dark, deserted. We walked through the garden into an alley. A car was there.

"You drive, Mr. Hunter. Miss Parks will sit in front with you. I shall be in the rear."

"Now, look—"

"Suit yourself, Mr. Hunter. The gun will not make enough noise to attract attention, and I shall leave it here with the two of you and return to your room and go back down to the bar. Another suicide, a double suicide this time."

"You and the local police—" I began.

"My contacts in this country are excellent, Mr. Hunter."

We got into the car.

I drove slowly, following his directions, skirting the main part of the town, picking up the main road to the north, towards the airport. Louise sat beside me, in silence for the most part.

Once she said, "The sea breeze is up now. It'll be cooler before long." And her hand touched my knee, gently, firmly. There were many things I wanted to say, but the words eluded me. I could see her face only dimly.

"You do mix a good martini," she said. "I was angry when I said you didn't."

"That was a long time ago."

"In a way. A lot of things have happened."

"Yes," I said. "I'm afraid that—"

"You have only yourself to blame, Mr. Hunter," Dodge said. "You should have remained a tourist, an innocent bystander. Your curiosity—"

"Potter knows," I said. "The State Department man who flew down from Washington. I told him the whole thing, chapter and verse, about your radio and about the guns—"

That was a mistake. I had gone too far. I heard him chuckle in the darkness.

"No, Mr. Hunter, you have not told Mr. Potter about the guns.

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Jonas Peters was very much at liberty when he came to see me this afternoon; and were the matter of the guns known—"

"Peters came to see *you*?" It popped out before I could stop it.

This time the laughter came, rumbling through the car, almost shaking us with its force.

"But of course! You should have expected that, Mr. Hunter. Jonas and I have known one another for some little time. We have our mutual interests. He told me the story of your afternoon conference—all of it."

"Oh!" I said.

"Your reasoning powers are considerable, Mr. Hunter, that I will grant. Your judgment is poor."

"Oh," I said again. I looked at Louise. "I got you into this—"

"No." She was still smiling, but the quality of the smile had changed. "I did the pushing—"

"Pull in here, Mr. Hunter, and park. Beside this hangar. So! Now get out."

The main airport buildings were dark. Only the limit-lights of the runway showed. Outside the hangar, the same small cabin plane was warming up, and as we walked towards it, a man appeared out of the darkness and said something to Dodge in a language I did not understand. Dodge answered in what was apparently the same tongue. Then, in English: "The plane is quite ready, Mr. Hunter. I have explained to my friend that it will be left, in good condition, at the airport at Cap-Haitien. A short flight, Mr. Hunter, and you are a good pilot. There is a chart in the plane."

Louise sat beside me, as before. Dodge sat in the rear seat. I spread the chart beneath the small maplight, although it was not at all necessary. I had already memorized the geography. I was thinking of Peters, of his visit to Dodge after our talk. I tried to reconcile that visit with what I knew of the facts. I could not. There was only the one explanation, and that was the one which Dodge had proved in the car.

I had walked into the trap with my eyes wide open, and I had dragged Louise in with me. Sitting there, pretending to study the chart, my mind began to make wild rushes in this direction and in that—I thought of refusing to take off, of ground-looping the plane, of jumping out and running off into the darkness—all of them foolish, ridiculous thoughts.

"You should be ready by now, Mr. Hunter."

I refolded the chart. "Yes," I said. There was no other way. If Peters had crossed us—I didn't dare to finish it, even in my own mind.

I shut off the map-light and watched the glow of the instrument panel. I hoped that the compass was right. We taxied to the head of the runway, paused there for a moment, and then took off. This was the only chance. I circled the airport, gaining altitude, and when we had enough, I settled on our course, east of north. The mountains were black shapes beneath us.

Dodge said, "There is a ship in the harbour at the Cap, Mr.

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Hunter. It is a friendly ship ; it will carry us to Cuba. No, it will carry *me* to Cuba. You and Miss Parks will disembark before we reach Cuba."

Louise said, " There's no place to disembark between the Cap and Cuba. There's only water."

" Yes," Dodge said, " that is correct, Miss Parks." He paused. " I shall remain in Cuba for a little time, until any furore that may be raised by your disappearance will have died down, until certain friends of mine have seen to it that the death of your brother has been officially called suicide. Then I shall return."

" The embassy—" I began.

" Your embassy is impotent, Mr. Hunter. It has tried several times to have me extradited and has not even been able to accomplish that."

" For passport fraud," I said.

" Yes. I have been in your country many times, under many names. If it suits me, I shall go again. There are ways."

" No doubt," I said. " Ours is not a police state."

" That, Mr. Hunter, is a stupid phrase. A country must be governed. The concept of self-government by the masses is ridiculous. They must be led. Sometimes they must be driven."

" Must be pleasant," Louise said scornfully, " if you happen to be driving."

I watched the compass carefully. I watched our airspeed and the flight clock. Finally I saw lights ahead and I began to drop down towards them.

" There is the Cap," Dodge said. " You are a good pilot, Mr. Hunter."

His voice almost purred with satisfaction. " If you had been taught to plan carefully, and to judge carefully, as I have, the ending might have been a little different. But that, of course, is the difference between our two civilizations."

" Did you invent civilization too ? " Louise said. " Along with everything else you claim ? "

It got him.

" You are jealous, that is all," he said, and the satisfaction was gone from his voice, leaving it raw and bare. " You are blind, you Americans, you British, you so-called Western democracies. You wallow in your own self-satisfaction. You—"

There was much more of it, but I wasn't listening. I was concentrating on the lights, trying desperately to pick out the airfield, almost holding my breath.

The palms of my hands were wet. I saw the field and headed towards it, but there was no indication, none at all, that—

Dodge said, " Mr. Hunter, I see no ship in the harbour."

I tried to think of something to say. It was Louise who saved the situation. " I imagine that he's busy now, superman. A night landing on a strange field—"

That was too close, and she switched it smoothly. " Maybe your precious ship hasn't arrived here yet."

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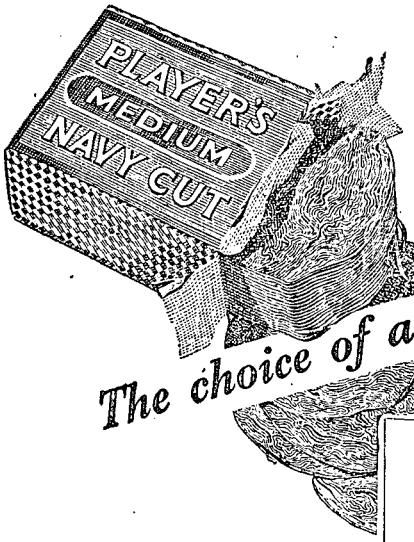

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"It should have," Dodge said. "I was in radio contact with it yesterday, and—"

"Maybe sometimes even your kind of people make mistakes. Had you thought of that?"

And that started him off again, thank God! I came in fast, fish-tailing to kill our speed. I saw a dark shape towards the end of the runway and headed for it. I think I was muttering a little prayer beneath my breath. I slammed on the brakes as hard as they would go and kicked the rudder over. One wingtip almost caught the ground. And then we were stopped and the dark shape erupted men moving quickly towards us.

I threw open my door and Louise did the same and the night was filled with brilliant light, all of it concentrated on us. I sat there limp, watching the guns covering the three of us.

Dodge said, "What is this?"

It was Louise who answered him. I don't believe I could have. "Your destination, superman."

Then an accented voice, speaking the loveliest words I had ever heard, said: "This is Monte Cristi, Senor Dodge. This is the Dominican Republic. You will raise your hands and come out slowly."

The voice paused, and I could almost see the shrug. "Or you will not. It is all one. We can shoot you as easily where you sit."

It was two days later. The four of us—Louise, the Ambassador, Potter and I—sat in the Ambassador's room. "For the record," the Ambassador said, "your landing in the Dominican Republic instead of Cap-Haitien was a mistake?"

"For the record, yes," I said.

Potter's face produced a tight little smile which was, I think, as much as he could manage.

"An understandable mistake, Major. Monte Cristi is just across the border, not many miles from Cap-Haitien, and at night, flying over unfamiliar territory—"

"Quite so," said the Ambassador. He was wearing his perpetual smile, and his eyes, watching me, were not unfriendly. "From Mr. Dodge's point of view, it was an unfortunate mistake." He paused. "As soon as we heard he was there, we requested, through our embassy in Ciudad Trujillo, that he be extradited to the United States."

He paused again. "Unfortunately, Mr. Dodge had already been shot while trying to escape."

Louise said, "Escape where?"

Potter coughed.

"Oh," Louise said.

"The radio, in case you have been wondering, Mr. Hunter," the Ambassador said, "was of the type known as FM, and since there are no FM stations in this area, and hence no FM receiving-sets, its presence was never suspected. FM, I am told, operates only on line of sight.

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"This one was amply powerful to reach out into the waters beyond the Island of Gonave, to ships heading for, or coming from the Windward Passage."

He stopped there and some of the friendliness went out of his eyes. "Had this been wartime, the radio could, would of course, have been used to supply information to enemy submarines. The Windward Passage, as you know, is a particularly vulnerable spot, almost as vulnerable as the Panama Canal itself."

"Howard was the one who found the radio," I said.

The Ambassador nodded. "We are all in Howard's debt."

Potter stirred in his chair. He watched me. "In two days here, you managed to get around quite a bit, Major. You wouldn't have heard anything about guns, would you?"

"Guns?" We owed Peters our silence, I thought. The guns were a matter between him and the authorities. "I don't think I understand."

"I didn't think you would," Potter said. "A cache of them has turned up near the Dominican border, but that doesn't interest you."

"I'm afraid not."

A few minutes later Louise and I walked down the hallway. She said, "You're going back to the States?"

"Why," I said, "that—" I stopped there. Jonas Peters was coming up the stairs, walking slowly, carrying his hat in his hand. He made a little bow. He was smiling.

"An unexpected pleasure, Miss Parks, Mr. Hunter. Everything went well, I trust?"

I nodded. "Your contact in the Dominican Republic, whoever he was, provided a nice turn-out of soldiers to meet us."

"Splendid."

"But when Dodge told us that you had been to see him that afternoon—"

His face was suddenly harsh. And then he was smiling again. "That, Mr. Hunter, was a temptation which I was unable to resist. You can understand, of course?"

"Yes," I said. "You wanted him to think back to it and know, at the last, that you had a hand in trapping him."

"Precisely, Mr. Hunter. As I believe I told you, I do not view treachery lightly. I am sorry if it caused you anguish."

"It's done now," Louise said. "All of it."

I shook my head. "Not quite all. For your information, Mr. Peters, a cache of guns has turned up near the Dominican border. It appears that somebody has been indulging in a bit of gun-running."

"No!" In the one word he managed to express shock, incredulity and sorrow. He shook his head. "I find it hard to believe, Mr. Hunter, that anyone would—" He paused.

"Ah, well, there are all types of people in this world, are there not, Mr. Hunter?"

We stood there and watched him walk down the hall, tall, erect,

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his wide shoulders swinging easily. He entered the Ambassador's room. We heard his voice clearly; I think he intended that we should: "Good morning, George. I trust that I find you well, on this beautiful day?" The door closed quietly.

We turned away and started down the stairs. I said, "About my going back to the States right away—"

"Yes?" Louise said.

"I thought that maybe we could talk about it."

She nodded. Her face was grave, but her eyes were dancing. "I am listening, Mr. Hunter."

We walked together out into the bright sun.

★ *"The lovers stood like enchanted voyagers from another age as the pitching 'Hiro' approached the island. These were the hills that had bred the bravest navigators the world had ever known. These were the valleys of the most lewd pagan rites . . ."*

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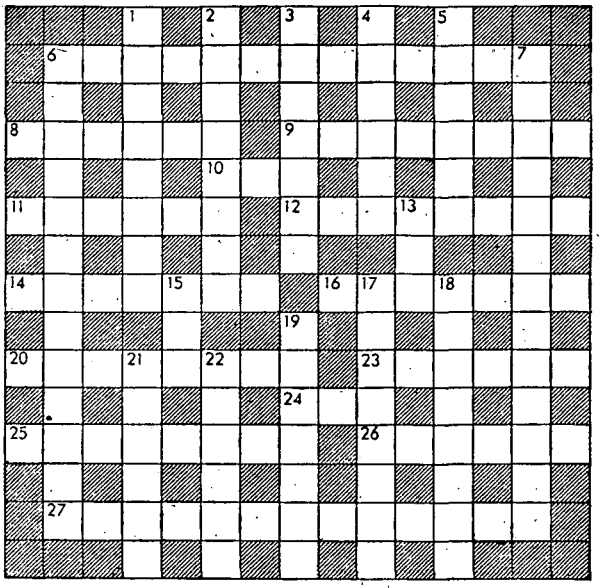
ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 57



CLUES

Across

6 Nuts to Utopia puts the lid on a trite saying (13).

8 The worst part of being dependable lies in being held finally responsible (6).

9 Confusion of date surrounds Lent; it needs a bright person to sort it all out (8).

10 A knight is in deep waters! Fish him out of the river of desire (3).

11 These stars put on a double act (6).

12 Daniel, it involves minute attention! (2, 6).

14 Attired in this the operatic house agent might announce that he had disposed of the property (7).

16 Tracer material (7).

20 Small enough to make a tulip ill (8).

23 Their hatching would release volcanic ash, among other things (6).

24 He is hiding in front of an assumed name! (3).

25 Uninfluenced by current trends (8).

26 Basically a three-dimensional figure which with a small addition becomes immovable (6).

27 Theory concerned with bursting into flower in the future? (13).

Down

1 Walkie-talkie out of control? (8).

2 "I crown thee king of intimate delights,—enjoyments, home-born happiness" (William Cowper) (8).

3 A fifty in it would make this part of the Commonwealth (7).

4 How William was named? (6).

5 Instrumental accompaniment for solo ice-cream? (6).

6 First and foremost a cabinet-maker (5, 8).

7 Add spice to a fiction by giving all the details (13).

13 Before both ways (3).

15 Cash part of the leit-motif (3).

17 One of the charms of fiction (8).

18 This would be a dangerous drug on the market (8).

19 This reaches from head to foot (7).

21 Arcade built partly of wood (6).

22 I'm in a fine spot for fish (6).

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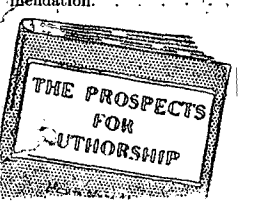

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